HOMEMADE Bread

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“Good bread is the most fundamentally satisfying of all foods, and good bread with fresh butter the greatest of feasts.”
–James Beard, American chef and cookbook author

Contents

8
Hearty and Healthy Breads

10 Time to Start Loafing Around
12 Bountiful Buckwheat Bread
14 Unbeatable Spelt Bread
16 Sweet as Honey Oatmeal Bread
18 Nutty Pesto Swirls
20 Alternative Flours
22 Wholesome Almond Flour Bread
24 Vibrant Vegan Banana Bread
26 High-Protein Quinoa Bread

28
Baking with Ancient Grains

32
Sourdough Sensations

34 The Science of Sourdough
36 Simple Sourdough Starter
38 Classic Sourdough Loaf
40 Seeded Multigrain Sourdough
42 Rosemary and Olive Sourdough Bread
44 Maintaining Your Sourdough
46 Sizzlin' Sourdough Pizza Crust
48 Can't-Miss Sourdough Crackers
50 Scrumptious Sourdough Pancakes

52
Flavorful Twists

- 54 Bread as a Canvas
- 56 Garlic Parmesan Breadsticks
- 58 Jalapeño Cheddar Cornbread
- 60 Top-Notch Tomato Basil Focaccia
- 62 Savory Sweet Potato Rolls
- 64 Flavor Inclusions
- 66 Authentic Cebularz Lubelski
- 68 Spinach and Feta Spanakopita
- 70 Pear, Thyme, and Gorgonzola Flatbread

72
The Healing Crust

76
Sweet Indulgences

- 78 Baking with Love
- 80 Classic Monkey Bread
- 82 Chocolate Babka
- 84 Apple Cinnamon Pull-Apart Bread
- 86 Luxurious Lemon Blueberry Bread
- 88 Dessert Breads Around the World
- 90 Pretty Pumpkin Spice Loaf
- 92 Cinnamon Raisin Swirl Bread
- 94 Buttery Bread Pudding

96
Knead to Know

The Joy of Baking Bread

A rich exploration of flour, yeast, global traditions, and delicious possibilities

Sure, going to the grocery store and grabbing a loaf of bread is quick, easy, and convenient; it's what most of us do each week. But what if there were an opportunity to make every sandwich-making, soup-dipping, and roll-eating experience even better? Enter homemade bread. Loaves that you craft from scratch in your kitchen are simply in a league of their own, and nothing compares to the intoxicating aroma of just-baked bread as it emerges from the oven, just in time for dinner. If it feels like something about rolling up your sleeves and making food with your own two hands makes the experience seem better, that's because it *is* better: Homemade bread is healthier, can be more

Warm, crusty bread dipped into a thick and flavorful soup is delicious, nutritious, and satisfying.

cost-effective in the long run, and is a wonderful canvas for creative expression. The deep satisfaction that comes from creating a bouncy, airy, crusty bread from scratch for your family to enjoy is like nothing else. And it's not as hard as you might think.

In the following pages, you'll find a bevy of recipes—sweet, savory, nutty, cheesy, decadent—to explore. From classics like Parmesan garlic breadsticks to international delights like Polish onion flatbread to delightfully sweet treats like chocolate babka, there's no shortage of diverse and flavorful dishes to make your family's tastebuds dance with joy.

All around the world—as true today as it's been for thousands of years—bread is a staple that binds family and friends together. It's an essential part of our breakfast nooks, lunch bags, snack plates, and dinner tables. In fact, according to a report by Custom Market Insights, the global bread market is on pace to reach a value of over $290 billion by 2030. For years, we've relied on bread to nourish our hunger, help us de-stress (carbohydrate intake can increase serotonin production), and add flavorful heft to our meals. Countries around the world have developed their own takes on bread over the centuries, leading to goodies like France's brioche and Mexico's conchas. Even the gluten-sensitive can join in on the fun now, thanks to a vast array of alternative flours that help determined bread lovers make loaves for everyone. So tie on your apron, flour your countertop, and get your kneading hands ready—let's bake!

Hearty and Healthy Breads

Wholesome loaves that are purpose-built to nourish your belly and please your senses and palate

Prepare to explore a warm and yeasty world of robust, fulfilling, and nourishing breads. The hearty, nutrition-packed bakes in this section will start your day off strong, and they don't fall short in the flavor department, either. We've got recipes for conventional wheat, oatmeal, and spelt, and for exotic ancient grains and modern darlings like almond flour. The best part:

By making homemade bread packed with fiber and nutrients, you're not just getting tasty treats—you're also boosting your health by leaving out preservatives and other unnecessary chemicals. Whether you're a novice baker or a longtime dough-master, you'll encounter new flavors and textures to delight your palate on the following pages. Your kitchen awaits!

German-style sourdough bread is often made with rye flour, giving the loaf a distinct dark hue.

Time to Start Loafing Around

Homemade bread beats store-bought loaves by a long shot. Here's why

Homemade bread can be a healthier alternative to store-bought options for many reasons, starting with control over ingredients. Bread made from scratch doesn't have to sit on a shelf for days or weeks, so it doesn't need the preservatives or other additives commonly found in commercially produced bread. These substances, aimed at extending shelf life or enhancing flavor, include sugar, corn syrup, sodium, and many chemicals that are a lot harder to pronounce. Store-bought bread isn't exactly baked, in the truest sense of the word. Rather, it's manufactured: designed for quick, cheap, mass consumption, and driven by goals like consistency, efficiency, and low cost. Homemade bread is different: a unique experience each time, made purely to please, and with no preservatives or other non-bread ingredients. "Many commercially prepared breads contain over 130 mg of sodium per slice," says personal trainer Andrea Boldt on the diet and fitness resource Livestrong. The refined white flour used in many commercial breads often contains sugars, too, resulting in a high glycemic index. Whole grain flours, on the other hand, boast a lower glycemic index, slowing the rise in blood sugar levels—an important factor in managing weight and metabolic health.

If homemade bread often contains less of the bad stuff, it also usually has more of the good stuff, including essential nutrients like iron, magnesium, and B vitamins. With commercial bread, grains are sometimes stripped of their germ and bran during the flour's refining process, destroying much of their nutritional value. Homemade breads can avoid overly processed flours: In fact, when making your own bread, you can incorporate any of a wide variety of grains, like spelt, barley, or rye, to diversify your nutrient intake. Including seeds and nuts—not always an option with cheap commercial bread—not only adds texture and flavor, but also increases the levels of protein and omega-3 fatty acids. When you bake your own bread, you can also swap in healthier cooking oils like extra virgin olive oil, which has more antioxidants than canola or vegetable oil.

And there's more. "If you have serious food allergies, you can tailor your bread recipes to leave

One of these is store-bought white bread; the other is homemade seedy bread. And the nutritional difference is just as clear as the visual difference.

out the offending ingredients," Boldt goes on to explain. "Even manufactured breads that do not contain the allergen may have been produced on equipment contaminated with it." In your own kitchen, you can easily account for any digestive issues.

Despite its health benefits, homemade bread is still calorie-dense, so it's important to consume it in moderation and within the context of an otherwise varied diet. That means portion control, which can be tricky when the bread tastes amazing. One effective method: Pair a slice with proteins such as eggs or a small portion of lean meats for breakfast or lunch. This way, each meal has a balance of macronutrients: carbohydrates from the bread for energy, along with proteins and fats for satiety.

Homemade bread is often rich in nutrients like iron, B vitamins, and magnesium.

Choosing to bake your own bread can improve your diet, and it can help your mindset, too. It's psychologically gratifying to turn a pile of raw ingredients into a warm, heavenly loaf. Baking bread reminds us about what we eat and encourages healthier dietary choices. That's a crucial step towards improved health—with no added preservatives.

Bountiful Buckwheat Bread

A star ingredient contributes dense flavor, tender texture, and earthy, nutty notes

This is a soft and rich gluten-free bread that will bring smiles to anyone who follows their nose and snags a bite. Balanced by a little sweetness, salt, milk, and eggs, this recipe'll have everyone around asking for seconds—you might just have to turn that oven back on.

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

2 Tbsp of honey or maple syrup
¾ cup warm water
1 packet of active dry yeast
1 ¼ cups buckwheat flour, plus extra for sprinkling
¾ cup gluten-free flour (choose a blend that has xanthan gum)
1 tsp salt
2 eggs
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for greasing
½ cup room-temperature milk
1 Tbsp seeds (such as flax, sesame, or sunflower), optional

Instructions

1. In a large bowl, dissolve the honey or maple syrup in warm water. Sprinkle the packet of yeast over the surface. Let it sit for about 10 minutes or until it's frothy, which means that the yeast is active.

2. In a separate bowl, whisk the dry ingredients (both flours, plus salt) together until combined.

3. Crack the eggs in another bowl and beat them well. To the yeast mixture, add the extra virgin olive oil and beaten eggs; mix well to incorporate. Now slowly introduce half of your dry ingredient mix into this wet mixture using a wooden spoon, stirring thoroughly until smooth.

4. Stir in the room-temperature milk gradually, then add in the remaining flour mixture. Keep stirring until you form a sticky dough.

5. Sprinkle a flat surface with additional buckwheat flour and knead your dough on this gently for about two minutes. The dough will be slightly sticky, but don't add too much flour—you want some moisture present.

6. Grease a bowl lightly with extra virgin olive oil and place your dough inside, turning it once to coat it with oil on all sides. Cover the bowl with a kitchen towel, then let it rise in a warm place free from drafts until it puffs up, which should take about an hour.

7. Grease a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan with some extra virgin olive oil. Preheat your oven to 350°F.

8. Once your dough has risen, punch it down gently and transfer it into your prepared loaf pan, shaping it evenly. Sprinkle your choice of seeds atop your loaf, if desired.

9. Once the oven is ready, bake the loaf at 350°F for about 45-60 minutes or until the top has darkened and a light finger tap yields a hollow sound.

10. Remove the bread from the oven and let it cool in the pan for about 10 minutes. Then carefully remove the bread from the pan and place it on a wire rack to cool completely. Slice and enjoy!

What's So Special About Buckwheat?

Don't be fooled by its name—buckwheat isn't actually a type of wheat. Rather, it is a pseudocereal that's more closely related to rhubarb and sorrel. This gluten-free superfood boasts an impressive range of health benefits: It's revered for its high mineral and antioxidant content, and it packs in significant amounts of magnesium, copper, and manganese (which are essential for bone health, blood sugar regulation, and proper cardiovascular function). It's also high in phosphorus, a vital element for the development and upkeep of the body's tissues.

More impressively, buckwheat's protein is superior because it offers all nine amino acids essential for humans, including lysine (which is often low in plant foods). Concerned about heart health? Buckwheat's rich supply of flavonoids like rutin fortifies blood vessels and reduces the risk of hypertension. Its low glycemic index also helps maintain steady glucose levels—a benefit for anyone monitoring their blood sugar.

Unbeatable Spelt Bread

A high-fiber feast for the senses, ripe with acidic notes and nutty undertones

Making bread using spelt flour, an ancient grain that people enjoyed for thousands of years—never disappoints. Serve up this delicious, easy-to-digest wonder and watch it warm your family's bellies and souls.

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

½ cup warm water
1 ½ tsp honey or maple syrup
1 packet of active dry yeast
1 cup almond milk
3 Tbsp olive oil, plus extra for greasing
½ tsp sea salt
3 ½ cups whole sprouted spelt flour, divided
1 Tbsp seeds (such as flax, sesame, or sunflower), optional

Instructions

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F.
2. Combine the warm water and honey or maple syrup in a sizable mixing bowl. Over this mixture, evenly scatter the yeast, then let it sit for ten minutes to activate—you're aiming for a frothy appearance as confirmation the yeast is alive and active.
3. Pour in the almond milk, olive oil, and salt, along with just two cups worth of the spelt flour. Stir everything together just until you can see a dough beginning to form—make sure not to overdo it or mix too vigorously.
4. Continue by gradually adding in the remaining flour, half a cup at a time. Knead the dough after each new addition of flour until you notice it turning into a smooth and elastic texture, which typically takes up to eight minutes. The dough should come together nicely in your hands without leaving any sticky residue.
5. Use olive oil to lightly grease a large mixing bowl, then add the dough in. Cover the bowl with a kitchen towel and set it aside for an hour or until the volume doubles.
6. Grease a standard-sized loaf pan, or use parchment paper for easier cleanup.
7. Once the dough rises, deflate it by gently punching it down. Set it inside the loaf pan, neatly folding under any rough edges until you have a smooth oval ball. This is a good time to add any seeds or nuts you're using to the top of the loaf—they should stick to the top thanks to the oil from the bowl. Use the kitchen towel to cover the dough once more in the loaf pan—about a half an hour or so should do it.
8. When your oven's ready, let the dough bake for about 45 minutes. You'll know it's ready when you see a golden brown hue on the top or it gives off a hollow sound upon being tapped.
9. Following baking, release the bread from its pan and let it cool down on a wire rack for 10 minutes before you slice. Eat as much as your heart desires. If you won't be sharing or using all the bread up today, make sure to either store the rest in an airtight container or store it sliced and frozen for up to one month, to extend your enjoyment.

Sweet as Honey Oatmeal Bread

Packed with healthy carbs, plenty of protein, and a touch of sweetness, this bake is sure to satisfy

This bread is a nutritious, filling whole-grain loaf that tastes like love. While it may be a bit sweet, rest assured it's a fiber-filled masterpiece that will leave your body feeling great.

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

1 cup boiling water
1 cup rolled oats, plus more for sprinkling
¼ cup warm water
1 packet active dry yeast
2 Tbsp unsalted butter
¼ cup honey
1 ½ tsp salt
½ cup room-temperature milk
3 cups whole wheat flour, plus more for dusting
3 Tbsp olive oil, divided

Instructions

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F.
2. Place the oats in a large mixing bowl and pour the boiling water over them, letting them soften for about 15 minutes. Drain the oats if there's still water left over after that time.
3. In a small bowl, combine the warm water with the yeast. Stir it and let it rest for about five to 10 minutes or until the mixture becomes creamy, indicating that the yeast is active.
4. Place the butter in a small bowl and microwave it for about 15-20 seconds, or until it's fully melted. Let it cool until it's lukewarm to the touch.
5. Add the honey and salt to your softened oat mixture, followed by the melted butter. (Make sure the butter has cooled slightly—high heat will kill the yeast.)
6. Pour the room-temperature milk into the mixture. Next, add your activated yeast mixture, once it has become frothy.
7. Begin adding in the whole wheat flour, one cup at a time, stirring until a sticky dough forms. When you've added all three cups, place the dough onto a lightly floured surface. Knead this for about eight minutes or until it becomes elastic and only slightly sticky, adding more flour as necessary.
8. Use half the olive oil to grease a large bowl, then transfer the dough in. Rotate the dough so that the entire surface is lightly coated with oil, and cover it with a clean cloth. Allow it to rise in a warm space for one hour or until it has doubled in size.
9. Grease a standard-sized loaf pan with the other half of the olive oil.
10. Gently punch down the risen dough and shape into a log that fits the pan, tucking in any pieces that protrude. Cover it again with a clean cloth, and let it rise for another 30-45 minutes, or until it reaches just above the edge of the pan.
11. Once the dough has risen again, place the loaf pan in the preheated oven and bake it for 30-35 minutes. When there are just 15 minutes left in the bake time, you can sprinkle some extra rolled oats atop the bread, if desired. You'll know the loaf is done when the top is golden brown and the bread sounds hollow when tapped.
12. Take the bread out of the oven and leave it to cool in the pan for about 10 minutes. Then, transfer it to a wire rack to cool completely.
13. Slice and serve your oatmeal honey bread. Any remaining bread will last three to four days if kept covered at room temperature on the counter, or for up to a week in a refrigerator.

What's So Special About Oats?

Oats are supergrains, and they stand out in the pantry for their impressive nutrition profile. Packed with soluble fiber (especially a type known as beta-glucan), oats help regulate cholesterol levels and boost heart health. This reliable breakfast staple also keeps you feeling full longer, aiding in weight management. The high fiber content is excellent for improving digestion, preventing constipation, and supporting good gut health. For active individuals, oats provide sustained energy thanks to their low glycemic index. Their complex carbohydrates slowly release energy, ideal for enduring workouts or long days at work.

Oats are a powerhouse of essential vitamins and minerals, including B vitamins, copper, iron, magnesium, and zinc, helping contribute to overall body health. They also contain a helpful group of antioxidants called avenanthramides that possess anti-inflammatory properties and help lower blood pressure—and only oats have them. For individuals with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity, pure oats are a safe option since they're naturally gluten-free. However, they can sometimes be contaminated during processing, so it's crucial to choose certified gluten-free products if that's an issue.

Nutty Pesto Swirls

These savory swirls are the perfect complement for a fall squash soup

An explosion of flavors waits to greet you in every bite you take—bright, herby, cheesy…what else could you ask for? (If your answer is "garlic," you're in for a treat.) Meet the rolls that outshine all others.

Yield: 12 rolls

Ingredients

⅓ cup salted butter
2 Tbsp maple syrup
1 cup milk
3 small eggs (or 2 large ones)
1 packet of instant yeast
3 ½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
1 tsp sea salt, divided
3-4 Tbsp olive oil, divided
¾ cup basil pesto, plus extra for top brushing
1 cup Parmesan cheese
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
Pinch of black pepper
2 Tbsp Italian seasoning
4 cloves garlic

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Add the butter, maple syrup, and milk to a small saucepan, letting the ingredients heat up as you stir them. Remove the pan from the heat once the butter has melted.
3. Crack the eggs into a small bowl and beat them until the egg whites and yolks are blended.
4. Make things easier on yourself by using a stand mixer (dough-hook attachment and all) for this recope. Add in the butter–syrup-milk mixture, followed by the yeast, flour, eggs, and half the salt. Set the machine to medium speed for about five to 10 minutes.
5. Once you've got a dough ball, let it sit while you grease up a medium-large bowl with half the olive oil and place the dough ball in. Cover with a slightly damp kitchen towel for about 10 minutes.
6. Prepare a clean, clear, and spacious work area. Cover the surface and a rolling pin with a light dusting of flour. Roll out the dough into a roughly 12-by-18-inch rectangle and, using the back of a tablespoon, spread the pesto across the surface. (You can use store-bought pesto, or make your own following the recipe on the right side of the page.)
7. Lightly scatter the two kinds of cheese across the dough, followed by the other half of the salt, pepper, and Italian seasoning.
8. Peel and mince the garlic. Scatter the garlic evenly across the dough as best you can.
9. Now comes the fun part! Create rolls by tightly rolling up the dough hotdog-style (roll from the long edge of the rectangle). Using unflavored dental floss, gently slice 12 separate rolls—try to avoid smushing them. They should each be about one and a half inches thick.
10. Using the remainder of the olive oil, grease a baking dish (ideally about 9-by-13 inches) and lay the rolls in on their sides. Dampen a kitchen towel, and use it to loosely cover the dish so the rolls have room to rise. This should take less than half an hour.
11. Once the rolls have risen, remove the towel and place pan on the oven's middle rack to bake for about 15-20 minutes.
12. Remove the pan of baked rolls from the oven, let them cool a bit, and serve them warm. If you have leftover pesto, you can optionally add a bit more to the tops of the rolls now to make them a bit nuttier.
13. Using a spatula, separate and scoop each roll onto a plate or store them in an airtight container in the fridge for later. Bon appétit!

Homemade Pesto

There's nothing like slathering fresh, homemade pesto on warm bread straight from the oven. Let's dive into making a classic pesto that'll bring those warm homemade slices to life.

Yield: **one cup**

Ingredients

2 cups fresh basil leaves
3 medium garlic cloves
⅓ cup pine nuts
2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Pinch of salt
Pinch of ground black pepper

Instructions

1. Thoroughly rinse the basil leaves under cold running water, then pat them dry with a clean paper towel.
2. Peel the garlic. On a cutting board, finely mince the garlic cloves, then set them aside.
3. In a dry skillet on medium heat, toast the pine nuts for four to five minutes, until they're golden brown. Keep an eye on them—they can burn easily. Once toasted, let them cool on a separate plate.
4. To your food processor or blender add the basil leaves, garlic, pine nuts, fresh lemon juice, and freshly grated Parmesan cheese. Pulse until the ingredients are coarsely chopped.
5. Slowly drizzle in the extra-virgin olive oil while the machine is still running to ensure everything is combined smoothly.
6. Season with salt and ground black pepper to taste. Enjoy!

Alternative Flours

Everyone deserves to get a taste of fresh-baked goods—even those with digestive issues

Embracing the world of gluten-free baking doesn't mean you only get one kind of alternative flour. In fact, trying a variety of non-wheat flours can enhance your baking with new flavors and textures. Some gluten-free recipes will contain one or more of these flours, but they can also be added to other bakes to heighten flavor and provide health benefits. Just remember, substituting these flours isn't always a straightforward 1:1 ratio, so you'll have to research recommended ratios online when replacing the wheat in a traditional recipe with a gluten-free alternative. Some options:

Almond Flour: This flour, produced from finely ground almonds, is a health superstar, high in protein and monounsaturated fats. Expect a moist texture and buttery flavor that can add richness to any loaf.

Chickpea plants can be harvested about three months after planting them.

Arrowroot Flour: This flour comes from the root of a tropical plant known as *Maranta arundinacea*. It's extremely versatile and makes for a fantastic wheat flour substitute. Often used as a thickening agent, it can also lighten the texture of gluten-free recipes when blended with other flours.

Brown Rice Flour: Milled from brown rice, this flour brings a nutty flavor and a tender crumbiness to your bread. Its whole-grain origin means it's rich in fiber and vitamins, making it a hearty alternative to white flours.

Cassava Flour: Ground from the whole cassava root, this flour provides a relatively neutral taste that lends itself well to baking where other ingredients need to shine. It's perfect for achieving a smooth texture similar to that of white flour bread.

Chickpea Flour: Versatile chickpea flour offers slightly nutty and bean-like notes, and is dense with nutritional value. Its robust flavor makes it best suited for savory, not sweet, bread recipes. Notably, it's also a bit more gritty compared to some other flours.

Coconut Flour: Highly absorbent and fiber-rich, coconut flour has a distinctive tropical aroma that can dominate other flavors if used excessively. Created from dried, ground coconut meat, this flour's fine texture gives breads a soft, light quality but requires careful balance with liquids.

Oat Flour: Ground from whole oat "groats" or rolled oats, oat flour brings a gentle sweetness and an appealing, hearty texture to breads. Besides its excellent nutritional profile, it helps create a soft interior and a robust crust.

Tapioca Flour: A starch extracted from cassava roots, tapioca flour contributes a glossy finish and chewy texture. It's ideal for creating crisp crusts and can also serve as an excellent thickener.

Teff Flour: This option packs hints of malt and chocolate into its tiny grains, offering slight sweetness and a unique, earthy flavor profile to baked goods. Harvested from an Ethiopian grain, teff flour provides a fine texture that helps gluten-free breads and desserts shine.

Teff flour is also a great source of fiber, calcium, and iron.

Wholesome Almond Flour Bread

Delicious, low-carb, gluten-free goodness you can share with friends and family—all of 'em

This moist and savory goodie will bring everyone into the kitchen in search of what smells so heavenly. It's a surprisingly fast and simple recipe—and with low carbs and no gluten, nearly everyone can join the fun.

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

1-2 Tbsp olive oil
2 ½ Tbsp coconut oil
¼ cup flaxseed meal
2 ½ cups almond flour
½ tsp cinnamon
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp sea salt
5 small eggs
1 egg white
½ tsp vanilla extract
1 ½ Tbsp apple cider vinegar
2 Tbsp maple syrup

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan with the olive oil, then set it aside.
2. Transfer the coconut oil into a microwave-safe bowl and heat it for 15 seconds to de-solidify it. Research recently published in the *Food and Function* medical journal found that coconut oil can actually improve antioxidant levels—so it's delicious *and* beneficial!
3. Add the flaxseed meal, almond flour, cinnamon, baking soda, and sea salt together in a large mixing bowl.
4. Prepare a second, larger bowl. Crack the five eggs into this bowl; eggs are necessary for the structure, texture, and moisture of this bake's final product. Add the additional egg white to the bowl as well, then add in the vanilla extract, apple cider vinegar, and coconut oil (warming it first if it's begun to harden again).
5. Add in the maple syrup: This delicious sweetener has 24 different antioxidants that can help reduce inflammation and lower cholesterol.
6. Whisk these ingredients together thoroughly until you've got a smooth mixture.
7. Take the dry ingredients and add them to the wet ingredients; whisk again until your mix is thick and well combined.
8. Place the batter in the pan you greased earlier and place it in the oven on the middle rack. Bake it for about 35-40 minutes. Once time's up, conduct the toothpick test to see if it's truly done: Stick a toothpick in the center of the loaf, and if it comes out clean, you know you're ready to roll. (Another good indicator is a nicely golden-brown crust.)
9. Remove the pan and let it cool on a wire rack for about 10 minutes. Once it's cool, you can free it from the pan and get slicing. You're in for quite a treat!

Vibrant Vegan Banana Bread

Irresistibly moist and packed with flavor, just like Mom used to make! Only better...

Nothing says home cooking like banana bread, and this masterpiece is sweet, fluffy, and oh-so-flavorful. You probably have most of these ingredients on hand already, so turning your kitchen into an aromatic zone of fresh-baked goodness couldn't be simpler to pull off.

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp cinnamon
¼ Tbsp salt
3 overripe bananas
½ tsp vanilla extract
¼ cup maple syrup
⅓ cup applesauce
⅓ cup almond milk
1-2 tsp olive oil

Instructions

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F.
2. Add the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt to a medium-sized bowl. Give these dry ingredients a good mix using a wooden spoon.
3. Peel and mash the bananas and add them to another bowl of the same size. These yellow beauties contain lots of potassium, which helps keep your heart healthy and helps maintain normal blood pressure. They're loaded with magnesium and vitamin B6, too.
4. Add the vanilla extract, maple syrup, and applesauce to the mashed bananas; stir until well combined. Add the milk and mix again. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and stir again, ensuring all ingredients have been adequately mixed.

5. Use the olive oil to grease a standard-size loaf pan.
6. Add the batter to the greased pan and place it in your pre-heated oven for approximately 45-55 minutes. Exact timing will depend on your oven, so keep a close watch—use your oven light so you don't have to open the oven door and disrupt the bake too many times, if possible.
7. Check if the bread is done by using a toothpick to pierce the loaf's center. If it comes out wet with wet crumbs still attached, it needs more time; if it comes out clean, your bread is ready.
8. Remove the pan from the oven, let it cool for 10 minutes, and then remove the loaf from the pan and slice it. Eat up, and store the rest covered up to maintain its moisture (for no more than a day on your counter, or for five days in the fridge). Freeze the rest for a sweet treat later.

Veganizing Recipes

It's much simpler than you think to substitute plant-based alternatives for eggs, milk, and butter. With eggs, one of the most effective swaps is a "flax egg," which is made by mixing one tablespoon of ground flaxseeds with three tablespoons of water. Let this sit for a few minutes until it becomes gelatinous and egg-like in texture. This concoction acts as the perfect binder for breads, mirroring the consistency that eggs typically provide, and can typically be swapped in a 1:1 ratio in baking recipes.

Plant-based milk is also straightforward to use: Simply substitute your usual cow's milk with almond, soy, oat, or any other plant milk you fancy, in a 1:1 ratio. The flavor profile will differ slightly, depending on the type you choose: For example, coconut milk has a more distinct taste compared to almond milk. So be sure to pick one that complements your bread's flavor. Finally, replace butter with plant-based butter or even oils like coconut or olive oil. Plant-based butters now come in sticks and tubs and are designed to behave like dairy butter in baking. When using oil in place of butter, the general rule is to use about ¾ the amount (so if the recipe says 1 cup butter, use 3/4 cup oil). Caveat: All the swap ratios mentioned here may require some tinkering—your mileage may vary.

High-Protein Quinoa Bread

Dig into the best seeded bread you can bake, and keep your family energized for hours

If you've ever had quinoa as a side dish, you're in for a treat. Baked into bread, this high-protein seed acts like a grain, contributing richness and earthy warmth to a loaf that's secretly high in energy-boosting protein.

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

1 ¾ cup almond milk
¼ cup tahini
1 Tbsp maple syrup
1 ½ Tbsp apple cider vinegar
1 ¼ cup almond flour
2 ½ cups quinoa flour
¼ cup flaxseed meal
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp baking powder
Pinch of salt
½ cup black and white sesame seeds, optional

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Add parchment paper to an 8-by-4-inch loaf pan, ensuring some parchment spills over on each end.
2. Add the almond milk, tahini, and maple syrup to a small bowl. Add the apple cider vinegar, too—it's not only a leavening agent, but it may also help you reduce blood sugar levels, lose weight, and calm acid reflux. Whisk the ingredients thoroughly to combine them.
3. In a separate, larger bowl, mix together the almond flour, quinoa flour, flaxseed meal, baking soda, baking powder, and salt.
4. Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir them together until you have a somewhat sticky dough.
5. You can now plop this dough into the loaf pan you've lined with parchment. Smooth out the top so it's a nice, flat surface.
6. Place the loaf pan in the oven on the middle rack. Let it bake for around an hour—this may vary depending on your oven, so be sure to watch it carefully.
7. This is optional, but for those who love a strong sesame flavor, feel free to sprinkle mixed sesame seeds on top of your loaf about 20 minutes before it's done. They offer a rich supply of beneficial fats, proteins, B vitamins, and antioxidant compounds. The loaf, when finished, should have a crusty and golden brown exterior.
8. Remove the loaf pan from the oven, letting it cool for about half an hour. After 30 minutes have gone by, you can remove it from the pan to finish cooling. It may be hard to resist slicing it until it's completely cool, but this will help avoid crumbling.
9. Once you've waited long enough, you can dive in and enjoy the fruits of your labor. If you don't foresee it all being eaten up today, store the rest covered up either on the countertop (for a day or two) or for up to a week in your fridge.

Baking with Ancient Grains

Discover the health benefits of grains from days gone by...and how to incorporate them today

Some ancient grains remain relatively unaltered by human intervention over the thousands of years we've been baking. Today, they're enjoying a resurgence among health enthusiasts and culinary adventurers alike. Grains like einkorn, emmer, Kamut, and spelt may sound like exotic ingredients from a bygone era, but they're getting easier to find. These grains let modern-day bakers create nutritious, flavorful bread that harks back to the very beginnings of agriculture.

Kamut (left), also known as Khorasan or Oriental wheat, has a ton of antioxidants and is a good source of fiber.

Touring Ancient Grain Varieties: Four Favorites

Einkorn, one of the earliest cultivated grains with over 10,000 years of history, boasts a higher protein content and a more nutritious profile than contemporary wheat. In contrast to contemporary wheat varieties that possess 42 chromosomes, einkorn has a mere 14—it's regarded as the most primitive wheat. Intriguingly, it lacks the D chromosome, which is often associated with the adverse reactions many individuals experience with wheat products, and it's generally great for your gastrointestinal health. Bakers can expect nutty and slightly sweet flavors with this ancient grain. Don't let its antiquity fool you: Einkorn packs a heafty nutritional punch with essential fatty acids, phosphorous, vitamin B6, and beta-carotene.

Next up is emmer—thought by most to be between 9,000 and 12,000 years old, but with some evidence to suggest its use may go back 19,000 years. Before its gradual reappearance in the modern world, emmer had been discovered in ancient tombs, biblical references, and archeological excavations. Following World War II, hybrid wheats took over, due to their easier cultivation and higher productivity. But the organic movement has brought grains like emmer back into the limelight. Known as farro in Italy, emmer wheat offers a slightly chewy texture and a sweet and nutty flavor profile, much like einkorn. Breads made with emmer are rich sources of magnesium, zinc, fiber, and other nutrients.

Kamut, an ancient grain twice as large as regular wheat, is also known as "King Tut wheat" due

to rumors claiming the grain was discovered in the Egyptian ruler's tomb. This grain is thought to have first been cultivated 6,000 years ago; it was almost lost and forgotten but was revived during the mid to late 1900s. Along with its fascinating history comes a unique nutty/buttery taste and firm texture that hint at its outstanding nutritional offerings: It's generally richer in amino acids, magnesium, and lipids than modern wheat varieties. "Kamut is also a great source of selenium, zinc, and niacin, which can help with inflammation and immunity," says registered dietician and nutritionist Amy Davis on the wellness platform Well+Good.

Archeological discoveries across Europe, including Britain, have unearthed carbonized spelt grains from numerous Stone Age sites. Spelt was a mainstay in medieval kitchens but has a low yield by today's standards, and had nearly disappeared from fields by the twentieth century. This hulled grain is making a comeback, however, thanks to its nutty flavor profile and its easy digestibility. (Spelt boasts a different molecular structure than modern wheat.) It's high in fiber and contains more protein than commercial wheat varieties, and it's a nutrition-rich grain, with relatively high zinc and iron content as well. Interestingly, spelt didn't reach the U.S. until the 1890s, but today this nutritious and versatile grain appeals to health-conscious consumers and professional bakers alike.

Above shows a 16th-century illustration of a man baking bread by artist Jost Amman.

Choosing Ancient Grains: Sourcing, Milling, Baking

Sourcing these nutrient powerhouses can be a little more challenging than picking up a bag of all-purpose flour at your local grocery store. One way to find ancient grains is through farmers' markets or local health food stores that recognize the growing demand among home bakers. Online retailers are also an invaluable resource; sites specializing in organic and heritage ingredients will often stock

A flour mill grinds wheat into flour; in the above photo, it's spelt.

various ancient grains. Heading straight to a qualified farm may be an option for you, too.

If you're lucky enough to have access to a miller or want to try milling at home, fresh-milled ancient grains offer superb flavor and nutrition retention. Milling at home has become easier than ever, with reasonably priced countertop grain mills available. Freshly milled flour not only retains more nutrients but also gives you complete control over the coarseness or fineness of your flour—an essential consideration when baking with grains like Kamut or spelt, which can behave differently than conventional wheat flour. "I love, love, love my grain mill, it's one of the appliances that I use almost on a daily basis or at least several times a week," says Becca Bristow, a registered dietician and Internet personality, on her YouTube channel. "You literally just pour the [grain] berries right in the top...fresh, nutrient-dense, antioxidant-rich flour just comes straight out into a bowl." Milling at home also allows creative bakers to experiment at home with unique grain combinations, creating custom flour blends tailored to their families' taste preferences and dietary needs.

Ancient grains can provide a rich, diverse nutritional profile when compared to modern wheat.

Baking with ancient grains over commercially produced options like white or all-purpose flour can provide a diverse nutrient profile and potential health benefits such as improved blood sugar control. It also supports environmental sustainability, preserving genetic diversity in agriculture, and maintaining cultural heritage and culinary diversity. Just keep in mind that ancient grains have different protein structures than modern wheat, so they often require a much longer amount of time to rise properly. Practice makes perfect.

Flour Brands To Look For

When it comes to the fine art of baking bread, you'll want the very best flours to start from. Here are four excellent options to consider.

One Mighty Mill: This brand stands out with its fresh stone-milled flour, a process that keeps the nutrients and flavors intact. Their commitment to locally sourced wheat ensures a more robust, wholesome, and sustainable product.

King Arthur Baking Company: The company's unbleached flours, which are free of bromate and artificial preservatives, come with the promise of non-GMO ingredients and a reliably consistent protein content. This commitment guarantees a predictable bake every time, which is ideal for bread artisans who depend upon a dough structure they can rely on.

Bob's Red Mill: Renowned for offering an extensive range of organic and gluten-free flour options, Bob's Red Mill always delivers. The brand's stone-milling method preserves nutritional value and taste, and sourcing from organic farms makes Red Mill an excellent choice for those with specific dietary needs who don't want to sacrifice quality.

Central Milling: This company is acclaimed for its organic and conventional flours milled from American-grown wheat. Their legacy lies in long-standing relationships with farmers, ensuring top-notch grains that endow your bread with unparalleled texture and flavor.

Sourdough Sensations

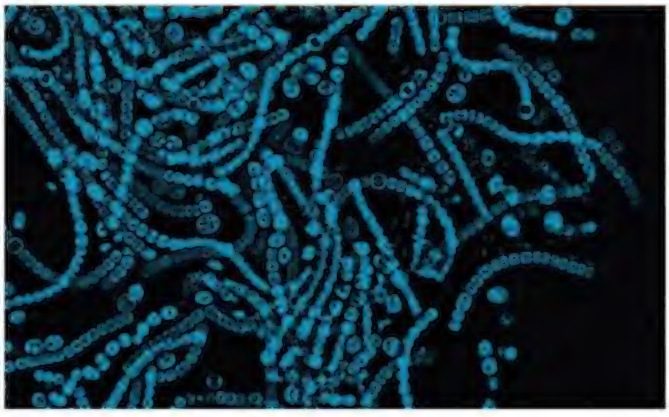
Got a friend or two bragging about a sourdough starter? Here's what the hype's all about

Sourdough bread embodies the essence of culinary artistry and tradition. Its complex tangy flavor, distinct chewy texture, and crisp crust make it a delight for the senses, earning it a revered spot in the hearts of food enthusiasts. The magic begins with a sourdough starter, a simple yet fascinating blend of flour and water that comes alive with wild yeast and bacteria. (In the pages ahead, you'll discover how to make your own.) Sharing your starter with friends or family is like passing on a cherished heirloom that could nourish them for decades. It's a living colony of helpful microorganisms, and even the discard can become the base for other delectable creations like salty sourdough crackers or fluffy pancakes. Sourdough is more than just bread: It's a sustainable investment in the future, and a rich medium for creative expression.

To score patterns in the top of your sourdough, use a tool called a lame (or a very sharp knife) before baking.

The Science of Sourdough

Understanding the physics and chemistry that makes the magic happen



Sourdough bread, with its distinct tangy flavor, crusty exterior, and chewy texture, has been enjoyed for over 6,000 years—it's a delicacy dating back to ancient Egypt. But what lies at the heart of sourdough is not just tradition or taste, but the fascinating scientific process of fermentation. At its core, sourdough relies on a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast, often referred to as a "starter," which acts as a natural leavening agent. Unlike commercial breads that use cultivated yeast for quick rise times, sourdough's rise through fermentation can take much longer—sometimes up to several days. This slow fermentation is where the magic truly happens.

Sourdough fermentation begins with a mixture of flour and water. In this simple mix, *lactobacilli* (bacteria) and wild yeasts present in the flour and surrounding environment spring into action. The lactobacilli feed on the starches in the flour, producing lactic acid as a byproduct; it's this lactic acid that gives sourdough its signature sour taste. But there's more than one player in this microbial orchestra. Wild yeasts also thrive in the acidic environment created by the lactobacilli, and they start to consume the sugars in the dough, releasing carbon dioxide. This bubbling gas gets trapped inside the dough's gluten network, resulting in the beautiful air pockets synonymous with artisanal bread. As these microorganisms munch away, they're not just inflating the dough: They're also breaking down complex carbohydrates into more digestible forms. It's thought that this process interferes with phytic acid—a substance present in grains that can hinder nutrient absorption. As a result, this fermentation makes minerals like zinc and iron easier for our bodies to take in.

Another advantage of this leisurely fermentation process is flavor development. The combination of acids produced during fermentation creates a rich depth that's usually absent from breads leavened with commercial yeast only. Additionally, pre-fermentation or autolysis helps enzymes break down proteins into amino acids and create flavor complexity.

While all bread can potentially fit into a balanced diet, sourdough may have an edge for numerous reasons. "Although the beneficial microbes in the starter tend to be lost during the baking process, the fiber and plant compounds, called polyphenols, become more bio-available," says registered nutritionist Nicola Shubrook. "These act as an important fuel source for our gut microbes, which explains why sourdough is a gut-friendly choice." And your gut is a major determinant of overall health, so by eating sourdough bread you're essentially giving a general boost to your well-being. (For more, see the sidebar on page 37.)

You'll be able to see bubbly activity in your starter after a few days of "feeding" it (see page 36 for more).

Simple Sourdough Starter

Nurture a homemade starter today and savor the results for years and years to come

Creating a sourdough starter takes time and patience. But make it once, and you'll have a robust culture to bake an endless string of tangy, artisanal breads. Here's how to cultivate a starter using just all-purpose flour and warm water.

Yield: one sourdough starter

Ingredients

5-lb bag of all-purpose flour
Warm water

Instructions

1. On day one, get your kitchen scale out and place a clean 32 oz glass jar on it. Record the weight of the jar on a piece of masking tape and stick this to the jar. Then, with the jar on the scale, tare the scale to zero. Measure out 100 grams of all-purpose flour into the jar. Tare the scale again, then slowly add 100 grams of warm water (75-80°F) to the flour in the jar. Take the jar off the scale, then stir the mixture until you get a thick but homogeneous paste. Make sure there are no dry lumps of flour. Cover the jar loosely with a cloth or paper towel to let the mixture breathe while keeping out dust and insects.

2. On day two, check for any bubbles, indicating yeast activity, but don't be surprised if there are few or no bubbles. You don't need to feed your starter on day two; just give it a little stir to incorporate some air.

3. By day three, you might notice some small bubbles and a slight change in size and smell—your starter is beginning to come alive! Place the starter jar on your kitchen scale—you'll know the weight of your starter by subtracting the total weight minus the weight of the jar (that you recorded on day one). Scoop out and discard about half of the starter (about 100 grams). To the remaining starter, add 100 grams of flour and 100 grams of warm water. Mix well, cover with a cloth, and let it rest.

4. On day four, the starter may now be noticeably active; bubbles should be seen throughout the mix and the smell should be slightly acidic but pleasant. Discard enough starter so there is 100 grams of starter left in the jar. Then, feed it with 100 grams each of flour and warm water as before. When feeding, you can strive for this 1:1:1 ratio (equal parts starter, flour, and water). Stir, cover, and rest it.

5. By day five, your starter should have nearly doubled in size

Add ingredients slowly so you can keep an eye on the scale measurement.

from day four and have plenty of bubbles. It might even start collapsing back on itself—those are all good signs! There should also be noticeable frothiness and an acidic, slightly yeasty aroma—characteristics of a strong sourdough culture. Repeat the discarding and feeding process from day four. If you have the time, you can establish a twice-a-day feeding routine (morning and evening) for more vigorous yeast culture development. The starter should double in size by a few hours after each feeding.

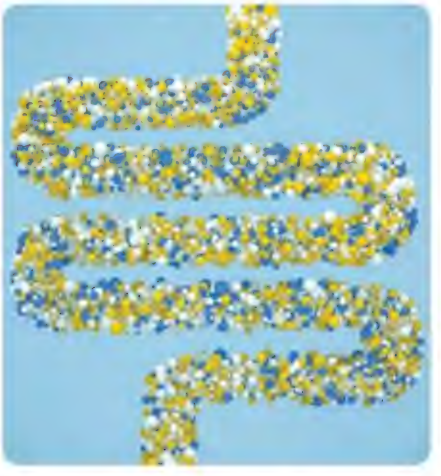
6. On day six, repeat the discard half-feed routine using equal parts by weight.

7. By day seven (sometimes a bit longer), your starter should be mature enough for baking bread. It will rise and fall predictably through post-feeding cycles, and have a strong sourdough scent—tangy and pungent. Feed it once per day if it lives on your counter (if you keep it in the fridge, feed it once per week instead).

8. Once your starter is ready, it's time to incorporate it into your sourdough bread recipes. Remember to always reserve some of your matured starter (about 100 grams) to keep as your starter for future use. Now you can follow your favorite sourdough bread recipe, incorporating this starter into the dough mixture, and enjoy the fruits of your labor with freshly baked sourdough bread.

NOTE: Our sourdough recipes measure ingredients in grams, because of the higher precision needed. Once you have your bowl on a scale that can measure grams, you can easily use it to measure everything that goes into that bowl. (Online calculators can convert grams to standard measurements, if you prefer.)

Sourdough and Your Gut



Sourdough bread, a marvel of fermentation, boasts unique benefits for gut health. The fermentation process of sourdough bread not only enhances its flavor but also reduces its gluten content. The acids produced during fermentation act to degrade gluten proteins, making the bread more digestible for those with gluten sensitivities. As a result, individuals with gluten intolerance may find sourdough bread to be a more comfortable option. Furthermore, the lactic acid bacteria predominant in sourdough production generate an acidic pH during fermentation, which can discourage harmful bacterial growth in your intestine once this bread is consumed. It's like sending in a culinary special ops team to keep your digestive tract more resilient against invaders.

Many people consider sourdough bread to be a probiotic, but it isn't—not quite. Although sourdough does indeed harbor beneficial *lactobacillus* bacteria, the intense heat from the baking process ultimately eliminates these probiotic organisms. But while the beneficial bacteria are indeed eradicated during baking, the bread then transforms into a prebiotic, serving as sustenance for a variety of beneficial gut bacteria, ultimately feeding and fortifying the gut's microbiome—the community of microorganisms that live in your digestive tract. And when your gut microbiome is balanced, your physical and mental health tends to be as well.

Classic Sourdough Loaf

A nutrient-rich bake that beckons with a mouthwatering aroma and airy texture

A classic loaf of sourdough bread never gets old—as evidenced by its resurgence in popularity during the Covid 19 lockdowns of a few years back. This lovely loaf features a signature tang, pliable interior, and delectably crisp crust, offering an unrivaled sensation every time.

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

100 grams active sourdough starter
330 grams water
8 grams sea salt
25 grams olive oil
475 grams all-purpose flour

Instructions

1. Take out your kitchen scale, place a large mixing bowl on it, then tare it to zero (subtracting the bowl's weight from the scale).
2. Place your starter (see page 36) in the bowl. For best results, make sure it's been fed in the last four to 12 hours so it's active and bubbling. Tare the scale again.
3. To the mixing bowl, add the water, salt, olive oil, and flour, taring the scale before each for precise measurements. Mix the ingredients with your hands, a wooden spoon, or a whisk.
4. Cover the bowl with a cloth or plastic wrap for half an hour.
5. After the half hour remove the dough from the bowl and either knead it in the taditional way or utilize the stretch-and-fold technique: This entails pinching the dough's edge, then gently stretching it outwards while lifting. It might resist and require a gentle

bouncing motion to elongate. Once extended, fold the dough back towards the center. Rotate the bowl 90 degrees and do it once more. Continue this for about four additional sequences.
6. Cover the dough and let it rest for 30 minutes before doing another round of stretch and fold; repeat this 30-minute rest and stretch and fold process once more. Cover it again and let it rise for three to 12 hours.
7. Lightly dust a work surface with some flour, then place the dough on the surface and form it into a sphere by gently twirling it towards yourself. There may be a seam on the bottom of the dough ball—that's okay.
8. At this point, leave the dough uncovered for up to 20 minutes; this creates a skin that ensures the dough won't stick to a tea towel when covered once more.
9. Lightly coat a bowl with flour and place the dough in (using a floured tea towel) with the seam, if there is one, facing upward.
10. Cover the bowl with a tea towel and let it rest for another 12 or so hours in the fridge (or at room temperature for three to four hours).
11. When you're ready to bake, place a large, lidded Dutch oven in the oven and preheat to 500°F. The Dutch oven will heat up within the oven's interior.
12. Cut a large piece of parchment paper and place the dough atop it. Score the dough with a design of your choice using a lame. (See the sidebar on page 41.) With oven mitts, take the hot Dutch oven out of the baking oven. Remove the lid, and put the dough and parchment paper into the Dutch oven. Replace lid and put it back in the baking oven.
13. Let the bread bake for 20 minutes, then remove the lid, turn down the heat to 475°F, and bake the bread for up to 25 minutes more. The bread is ready when it has a golden brown crust.
14. Take the dutch oven out and transfer the bread to a wire rack to cool for two hours. Once it's cooled completely, slice away and enjoy your little slice of heaven.

Seeded Multigrain Sourdough

Get your grain on with a recipe that takes bread crust to eleven and satisfies the hungriest crowd

There are seeds galore in this fresh, heavenly bread that the whole family will enjoy. It's the everything bagel of sourdough, so get your nosh on!

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

40 grams 10-grain cereal
30 grams flax seeds
40 grams hulled sunflower seeds, plus more for sprinkling
25 grams poppy seeds, plus more for sprinkling
35 grams sesame seeds, plus more for sprinkling
150 grams boiling water
50 grams active sourdough starter
300 grams warm water
50 grams honey
350 grams bread flour
100 grams whole wheat flour, plus more for dusting
16 grams sea salt

Instructions

1. Place a medium bowl on a kitchen scale and "tare" it so the weight says zero. In the bowl, add the 10-grain cereal, flax seeds, hulled sunflower seeds, poppy seeds, sesame seeds, and boiling water—make sure to tare the scale after adding each ingredient so you can keep track of measurements. Mix them together and set the bowl aside to soak.

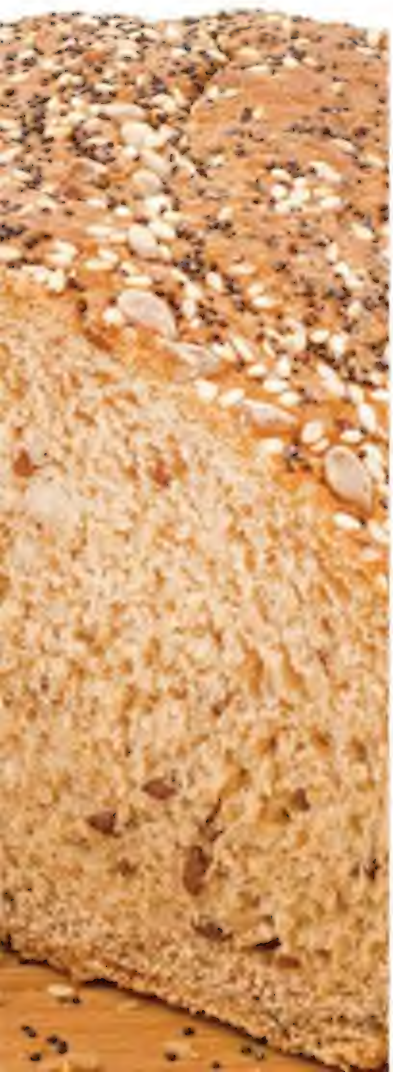
2. Place another large bowl on the scale, tare it, then add the starter (see page 36), warm water, and honey, pressing tare after each addition. Whisk them all together until combined.

3. Next, add the two flours and salt to the starter mixture, taring after each as well. Remove the bowl from the scale, then mix the dough for five minutes by hand, pushing and folding it in on itself until there are no more dry pieces in sight. Replace in bowl.

4. Cover the dough bowl with a clean, damp tea towel for about half an hour to let the dough rise, then mix in the soaked seeds, kneading and folding them in until all the ingredients are well combined. This should take about three to four minutes and might require some elbow grease. Cover

the bowl and let it rest for 30 minutes undisturbed.

5. Start the folding process inside the bowl by picking up a section of the dough, lifting it, and then turning it over itself while pressing down into the dough's middle with your fingertips. Keep rotating the bowl and repeat this technique until every part of the dough has been folded. Cover for half an hour, then repeat this process twice more, with half-hour increments in between each fold.



6. Once you've done the last fold, cover the dough and let it rise in the fridge for eight to 10 hours.

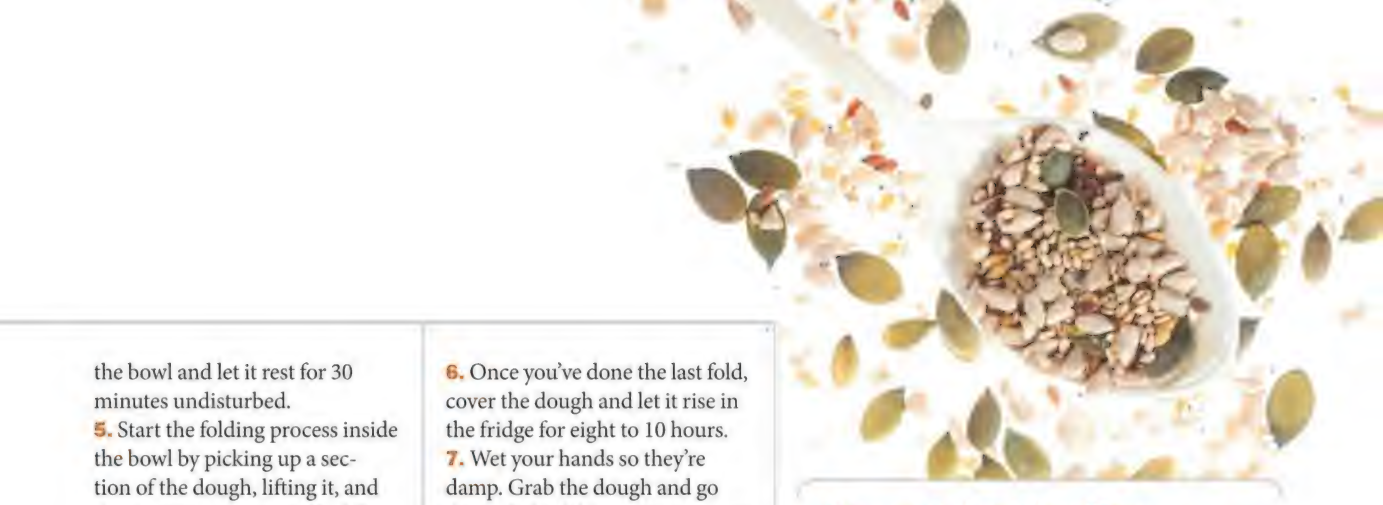
7. Wet your hands so they're damp. Grab the dough and go through the folding process once again, making sure to work all parts of the dough. Lightly dust another bowl with whole wheat flour, then transfer the dough to that bowl. Cover it and let it sit for 30 to 45 minutes in the bowl.

8. Preheat your oven to 450°F.

9. Place a sheet of parchment paper in an oven-safe "Dutch oven" covered pot, then place the dough in and score it. (See sidebar.) Put the lid on and move to the center rack of your preheated oven; bake for 30 minutes.

10. After 30 minutes, sprinkle additional sunflower seeds, poppy seeds, and sesame seeds atop the bread (if desired) and carefully push them down a bit. Let the bread bake uncovered for another 20 minutes.

11. When your bread is done, remove it from the oven and place it on a wire rack to cool for about 45 minutes to an hour. Slice and enjoy!



Score Like The Pros

Scoring your sourdough just before it goes in the oven is more important than it looks. It's not purely cosmetic: This is how you control how the bread will expand during baking. Without a score, your loaf can burst at its weakest point, usually in an uncontrolled, ugly manner. Proper scoring, on the other hand, creates weaker spots that guide the expansion, resulting in an even rise and a better crust. "Make sure to score deep enough, from 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch deep, erring on the latter," says Amanda Paa, a recipe developer, food photographer, and creator of the Heartbeet Kitchen blog. "This ensures the score doesn't fuse back together when the dough expands in the oven."

A variety of techniques to score sourdough create a range of aesthetics. The single, bold slash is easy, promoting good "oven spring" and creating a crunchy feature that professional bakers covet. Multiple parallel lines result in an artisanal, rustic look, or you can go simple with a classic crisscross. For those feeling artistic, there's room to play: Using a lame (a special razor blade on a stick), you can carve intricate patterns such as leaves or flowers; patterns like wheat stalks or geometric designs are also popular. The depth of cut influences the result: Shallow scores bloom gently, while deeper cuts open widely. No matter which style you choose, ensure your blade is sharp for clean cuts that will hold their shape in the heat of the oven.

Rosemary and Olive Sourdough Bread

The great savory tastes of the Mediterranean, right here at your fingertips

This easy-to-follow bread recipe highlights a beloved herb and classic salty topping. A crisp, savory crust protects a light and airy bread that's perfect for dipping in herby oil.

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

500 grams bread flour
350 grams lukewarm water
100 grams active sourdough starter
10 grams sea salt, plus more for sprinkling
30 grams rosemary leaves, plus extra for wrapping
60 grams pitted kalamata olives
Olive oil, for coating and brushing

Instructions

1. Place a large mixing bowl on a kitchen scale and tare it. To the bowl, add the bread flour, lukewarm water, and the active sourdough starter (see page 36), taring the scale after each addition. Mix until just combined and let it rest for about 30 minutes.
2. Add sea salt to the mixture and stir. Knead the dough in the bowl until the ingredients are thoroughly combined.
3. Finely chop the fresh rosemary leaves and add them to the dough. Chop the pitted kalamata olives and add them in as well, taring before each addition. Fold the dough over itself several times to incorporate the rosemary and olives evenly throughout.
4. Place the dough on a floured surface and knead for 10 minutes or so, or until it's smooth and has a slight sheen on the surface.
5. Shape the kneaded dough into a ball and place it in a clean bowl coated lightly with olive oil. Cover it with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let it rise at room temperature until it's doubled in size, about two to three hours (depending on your kitchen's temperature).
6. After this first rise, gently deflate the dough and shape it into a round loaf by pulling the edges under to create surface tension. Place the shaped loaf seam-side down on a piece of parchment paper.
7. Allow the shaped loaf to undergo a second rise in the refrigerator, covered loosely with a damp cloth for about eight hours or overnight, or until it has noticeably puffed up but not quite doubled.
8. Preheat your oven to 450°F with a lidded Dutch oven inside for preheating. This vessel will provide an excellent crust thanks to steam retention.
9. Score the bread with a lame (see page 41)—you can make fun patterns, if you wish, or go for something simpler.
10. With oven mitts, carefully remove the hot Dutch oven from your preheated oven, take the lid off, and place your parchment paper and scored loaf inside.
11. Brush the surface of the loaf with olive oil and sprinkle it with salt, then put the Dutch oven's lid back on.
12. Bake the bread covered for 20 mins, then uncovered for another 20-25 mins until it's golden.
13. Transfer the bread to a wire rack to cool for an hour before slicing. Wrap the loaf with some fresh rosemary sprigs for an extra touch of aroma and presentation. Enjoy with your favorite spreads, cheeses, or quality olive oil.

Altitude Adjustments

Baking at higher altitudes can be especially challenging when it comes to maintaining a sourdough starter. The thinner, drier air can lead to water evaporating more quickly from your starter, leaving it thicker than you want.

To compensate, bakers at high elevations like the city of Denver may need to increase the hydration of their starter. Raising the ratio of water to flour will create a wetter, thinner starter that won't dry out as quickly: Start by adding about 50 grams more water to your starter if you're at a high altitude, and see how that works. You may need to adjust this up or down, depending on where you're located.

Another consideration is the rate of fermentation. At higher altitudes, the atmospheric pressure is lower, too, and that can cause doughs to ferment and rise faster. You might need to adjust your feeding schedule to slow down this overfermentation, which can lead to a dense crumb and a weaker gluten network in your breads. One way to stop overfermentation is to decrease the amount of starter that you use. (These general truths will need to be fine tuned for your specific location; getting input from local blogs or bakeries can be very helpful.)

Maintaining Your Sourdough

Tips and tricks that'll help you keep your starter in the family for generations to come

Sourdough starters include a blend of bacteria and wild yeasts that need regular attention to stay healthy. To make a sourdough starter that'll last, you'll want to keep a close eye on it that first week after making it. In the first few days, the key is to watch for bubbles: There don't have to be many at this point, but if you see any at all, you're well on your way to success. If you notice a slim coating of dark fluid on your starter's surface, gently remove it. This substance, known as "hooch," is undesirable but not a starter-killer; it's just a sign that your starter is hungry. Day three (for many recipes) is when feeding begins. A great way to tell if your sourdough starter is active is through the smell it gives off. "The starter will have a strong, acidic, sour smell, like very intense yeast—this is due to the fermentation at work here," advises Jürgen David, the director of pastry research and development at the Institute of Culinary Education. "As the starter evolves, the odors will become more pronounced." The physical appearance, however, won't change much, other than more bubbles.

Feeding frequency is critical. On the counter at room temperature, the starter needs feeding every 12 to 24 hours. Once a day is fine if your kitchen's ambient temperature hovers around 68-70°F; if your home is warmer or you're a frequent baker, twice a day is ideal. Sourdough enthusiasts often keep their starters on the counter when baking frequently, as this promotes constant activity and keeps it ready for use. But if you lead a busy life and don't bake often, or can't manage daily feedings, refrigeration slows down the yeast activity dramatically; a chilled starter only needs feeding once a week.

Properly cared for, your starter will grow and grow, staying healthy for years. In fact, during each feeding, you'll typically discard half of your starter, or even more. This might seem wasteful, but it helps avoid an overaccumulation of the acids produced by fermentation, which can give your sourdough a pronounced acidity or even hamper yeast activity. Close your starter container with a loose lid or a cloth secured with a rubber band. A loose seal allows the gas produced by the yeast cultures to escape, while keeping out contaminants like dust or flies.

The color of your sourdough starter will reflect the type of flour you use: The rye starter in the images below has a slightly darker color.

Sizzlin' Sourdough Pizza Crust

A foolproof recipe that delivers a crisp artisan base for all your favorite toppings

This isn't your typical pizza—it's ten times better, thanks to its tangy sourdough bite. It may take a little longer to make, but the taste and texture of this doughy delight will more than make up for it.

Yield: two pizzas

Ingredients

50 grams active sourdough starter
280 grams all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
34 grams whole wheat flour
215 grams water
6 grams sea salt
10 grams olive oil, plus extra for greasing pan
Vegetables of your choice, as toppings
Cheese of your choice, as a topping
1 jar of pizza sauce

Instructions

1. Place a large mixing bowl on a kitchen scale and tare it.
2. Place the sourdough starter in the bowl (see page 36), ideally fed within the last four to 12 hours, followed by both flours, water, salt, and olive oil. Make sure to tare after adding each ingredient so you don't have to do any math. Give these ingredients a thorough blend using a wooden spoon, whisk, or stand mixer.
3. Grease a large bowl with additional olive oil, place the dough in, cover it with a tea towel or cling wrap, and let it rest for about eight hours at room temperature.
4. Preheat the oven to 500° and place two pizza stones (if using) in the oven to heat up as well.
5. Prepare your chosen toppings—wash any veggies or herbs being used, slice and dice them as desired, and shred or grate your cheese of choice.
6. Divide the dough into two equal balls. Lightly dust your work surface with flour and roll out each dough ball using a rolling pin.

7. Spread the pizza sauce evenly onto each rolled-out dough and add your prepared toppings (such as freshly sliced mozzarella, tomato slices, and basil). Transfer the pizzas to the preheated pizza stones (or to baking trays) and place them in the oven, putting each of them on their own rack.
8. Let the pizzas bake for about eight to 12 minutes, checking periodically to see if they're done cooking. (Everyone's oven is different, so bake time may vary by a few minutes. Slice and enjoy!

Use the back of a soup ladle to spread out the tomato sauce in a thin and even layer.

Can't-Miss Sourdough Crackers

Herb-infused squares that pack savory taste (and nutrition!) into every crispy crumbly mouthful

Your sourdough discard could have an alternate future: Let it bring a batch of thin, delicious, and easy-to-make crackers to life. Experimenting with repurposed ingredients has never felt—or tasted—so good.

Yield: about 50 crackers

Ingredients

80 grams unsalted butter
220 grams sourdough discard
90 grams all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
60 grams whole wheat flour
10 grams dried herbs
60 grams mixed seeds
5 grams sea salt, plus more for sprinkling
Olive oil, for brushing

Instructions

1. Melt the butter in the microwave for 10-15 seconds, then let it cool to room temperature.
2. Place a large mixing bowl on your kitchen scale and then tare the scale. Combine the sourdough discard, all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, dried herbs (you can use any herb combo you'd like to, such as thyme, oregano, and rosemary), mixed seeds (such as poppy, sesame, flax, and pumpkin seeds), melted butter, and sea salt, taring the scale after adding each ingredient.
3. Stir the mixture well, making sure it's well combined. The dough shouldn't be overly sticky, but if it is, you can introduce some additional flour (a tablespoon or so at a time until you can easily work with it.)
4. Separate the dough in half and form two portions. Wrap each portion in plastic wrap, then place them in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to let them chill.
5. Take one portion out and roll it out on a lightly floured sheet of parchment paper using a rolling pin until it's roughly rectangular and about ⅛ inch thick.
6. Periodically slide a floured spatula beneath the dough as you roll it out to prevent excessive sticking to the parchment paper.
7. Gently transfer the parchment paper (with the dough on top) to the baking sheet. Using a sharp knife or pastry cutter, slice the dough into cracker-sized squares. Using a fork, create small puncture marks on each cracker to help stop any large air bubbles from forming.
8. Brush the crackers with olive oil, then sprinkle sea salt atop the brushed dough.
9. Place the baking sheet in the center rack of the oven, and let the crackers bake for about 20 minutes (this may vary depending on your oven). When they're done, they should be slightly browned.
10. Remove the crackers from the oven and let them cool for about 15 minutes, then break them up into the squares you outlined earlier.
11. Repeat steps five to ten for the second portion of dough in the refrigerator.
12. Dive into the crackers right away or store them in an airtight container on your counter for no longer than two weeks.

Rethink Sourdough Discard

Some may not realize that the sourdough starter "discard"—the portion of your starter that's removed before feeding—doesn't have to go to waste. This byproduct is ripe with fermentation benefits and can be repurposed into delicious recipes. Sourdough crackers (the recipe on this page) are an excellent example: By mixing discard with flour, salt, and mix-ins like herbs or cheese, you create a tangy base that ferments slightly. The hydration from the discard melds with the ingredients to yield a dough that's pliable yet sturdy enough to withstand baking.

On the sweeter side, sourdough pancakes (recipe on page 50) harness discard in another way. Here, sourdough's inherent acidity reacts with leavening agents such as baking soda, which combine to create a light and fluffy texture in pancakes. Additionally, the fermenting yeasts contribute a depth of flavor uncommon in traditional white-flour pancakes. Both uses demonstrate sustainability and highlight how fermentation can elevate simple ingredients into gourmet meals.

Scrumptious Sourdough Pancakes

Create the most nutritious, berry-blissful short stack your family's ever had

Get ready for ultra-fluffy, filling, flavorful pancakes that will change the way you approach breakfast. The secret ingredient is sourdough discard that would have otherwise gone unutilized. Recycling is fun...

Yield: six to eight pancakes

Ingredients

1/4 cup unsalted butter
240 grams room temperature milk
4 grams vanilla extract
3 small eggs
240 grams sourdough discard
190 grams whole wheat pastry flour
5 grams salt
4.6 grams baking soda
4.6 grams baking powder
450 grams fresh blueberries, plus more for topping
5 grams salted butter, for frying

Instructions

1. Melt the unsalted butter in a microwave-safe bowl for 10-15 seconds—adjust this time according to your specific microwave. Let it cool completely.
2. Place a large mixing bowl on a kitchen scale, then tare it.
3. Add the butter, milk, vanilla, eggs, and sourdough discard to the bowl, taring the scale after each ingredient is added. Whisk vigorously to combine the ingredients.
4. Add in the dry ingredients one by one, taring the scale after each ingredient—the flour, salt, baking soda, and baking powder. Whisk to combine, then add the berries in and mix gently. This will be where you get a big dose of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants from the amazing superfood we call blueberries.
5. Place a skillet on your stovetop and turn it to medium-high heat before adding in the salted butter.
6. Transfer the batter to a measuring cup for ease of pouring and pour about 1/4 cup of batter in, (or however much you want for your desired pancake size).
7. Each pancake should cook for four to five minutes, or until you see drier edges and holes forming in the batter. Flip the pancake, then cook it for another two to three minutes or so.
8. Keep making pancakes until your family can't take any more. (You can store any leftover batter in the fridge.)
9. Sprinkle fresh blueberries atop your plate of pancakes. Of course, you can add any other classic (or innovative) pancake toppings as well. Syrup, other fruits, mint...
10. You can freeze any leftover pancakes. Let them get to room temperature, position them individually on baking sheets, and put the sheets in the freezer for 30 minutes—this prevents them from sticking. Remove them from the freezer, put them all into airtight freezer bags, and label the bags with the date. Put them back in the freezer for future eats.

Always whisk your pancake batter: It keeps dry lumps at bay and adds air bubbles, for light and fluffy pancakes.

Flavorful Twists

Gently pushing the limits of what bread can be uncovers some divine and unique dishes

Bread has been a foundational part of civilizations for centuries. But that doesn't mean it has to be boring. Welcome to a tantalizing world of flavor-packed delights, with each bake designed to electrify your taste buds. Treating bread as both cuisine and canvas paves the way for exploring all kinds of impactful herbs, spices, flavors, and textures you can experiment with. From the fiery allure of jalapeño cheddar cornbread to the savory embrace of Polish onion flatbread, the exotic, mouthwatering possibilities are endless. Flavorful masterpieces like the ones on the following pages make for a joyful communal experience, connecting friends and families and kindling memories as the intricate flavors dance on our tongues. Marvel at these intricate, but easy-to-bake creations—and get ready to wow your audience.

Rosemary and olive oil is a classic flavor combination for focaccia bread.

Bread as a Canvas

Why *not* play with your food—and try your hand at turning any simple bread into a masterpiece

Making a work of art out of a bread loaf is a delightful fusion of baking and creativity, yielding edible creations you can admire and then devour. Consider combining herbs and veggies for double the enjoyment—picture a beautiful sunflower made from orange bell pepper petals, black olive centers, and chive stems. Or perhaps you'd like to depict flowers still in bloom—why not go for halved cherry tomatoes supported by rosemary sprig stems? Herbs do more than garnish; they breathe life into your design. A scattering of dill might mimic delicate foliage, while basil leaves placed in pairs form butterfly wings upon your bread. For those craving sweetness in their spectacle, fruit can lend its vivid hues and natural shapes to your palette. Mango slivers can merge together as brilliant goldfish scales, blueberries dot the landscape mimicking a starry night, and figs halved and fanned create a purple-hued lotus bloom for a serene pond scene atop a warm brown crust.

Your baked-in scene isn't just about static beauty—it's also for storytelling. Fashion a classic seascape using cream cheese as crashing waves edged with crumbled feta for foam. Use seared bell pepper strips to create the warmth of a sunset sky on a flatbread horizon; boats made from triangular cheese pieces floating atop seaweed strips can complete your oceanic scene. To get the whole family involved in the fun, focaccia is a great surface for such art projects. "I recommend cutting one batch of focaccia in half to make two smaller pieces of bread and decorate them individually," says Elizabeth Marek, an artist, cake decorator, and teacher, on her blog Sugar Geek Recipes. "That's what I did with my daughter and we had a blast!" Throughout your creative endeavor experimenting with toppings and shapes, remember that the ultimate satisfaction comes not only from visual appeal but also from harmonizing flavors. Seek to combine ingredients that complement one another, so each bite is as delicious as it is picturesque.

You can even create season-specific edible art on bread when it's time to get festive. Spread beet hummus in the shape of hearts for Valentine's Day, or arrange olive pieces into a Jack-o'-lantern mosaic for Halloween revelry. When it gets close to the holiday season, you can even fashion a Christmas tree that uses green bell peppers for the greenery, mushrooms for the bark, and small bits of various colorful veggies as ornaments. For the star, any yellow fruit or veggie will do—mango, pineapple, squash, or corn. The only limit is your imagination.

Kids Corner: Children can also enjoy the excitement. Present them with designs that resonate with their specific age group (or cater to their special interests). Make use of the vast array of cookie cutters out there to cut out fun shapes from your homemade bread—think stars, butterflies, dinosaurs, owls, and more. You can take it further by decorating these shapes with fruits and veggies that match the cutout. For a butterfly, for example, you could have halved cucumber slices and cherry tomatoes as wings and circular patterns, and carrots as their body. Get creative!

Whether baked in (right) or raw (below), adding fruits, herbs, and veggies helps get picky eaters to boost their nutrition.

Garlic Parmesan Breadsticks

Where cheese knows no limits and garlic reigns supreme, life is lived one luscious bite at a time

Transform your kitchen into a gourmet bakery with these easy-to-make garlic-infused breadsticks. With just a few simple steps, you can create a batch of savory delights to rival those from any Italian restaurant.

Yield: 10 breadsticks

Ingredients

1 cup warm water
1 Tbsp sugar
1 packet active dry yeast
2 Tbsp unsalted butter
3 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
2 tsp garlic powder
1 teaspoon salt
Olive oil for coating and brushing
3 cloves of garlic
½ cup mozzarella and cheddar cheese blend
3 Tbsp black and white sesame seeds
¼ cup Parmesan cheese

Instructions

1. In a small mixing bowl, combine the warm water, sugar, and yeast. Stir gently to dissolve the sugar and encourage the yeast activation. Let this mixture sit for approximately 10 minutes, or until it becomes frothy and bubbly on top.

2. Using a microwave-safe bowl, melt the butter for 10-15 seconds in a microwave, then let it cool to room temperature.

3. In the bowl of a stand mixer with a dough hook (or a large mixing bowl, if you don't have a stand mixer), combine the activated yeast mixture with the all-purpose flour, melted butter, garlic powder, and salt. Mix on low speed (or by hand) until the ingredients begin to come together and form a cohesive dough.

4. Increase the mixer's speed to medium, or transfer the dough to a floured surface if working by hand. Knead it for approximately seven to 10 minutes until you have a smooth and elastic dough. If the dough is too sticky, add additional flour, just one tablespoon at a time.

5. Coat another large bowl lightly with olive oil and place the kneaded dough in it, turning it once to coat all its sides in oil. Cover this bowl with a clean kitchen towel and set aside in a warm place. Allow it to rise for

an hour or until it has just about doubled in size.

6. Once the dough has risen, punch it down to release any air bubbles. Turn it out onto a lightly floured surface, divide the dough into 10 equal portions, and roll each portion into roughly a seven-inch-long stick shape. Place these sticks onto a parchment-lined baking sheet.

7. Cover the shaped breadsticks loosely with cling film or another clean kitchen towel and allow them to rise once more, for about half an hour.

8. Meanwhile, peel and mince the garlic and grate the mozzarella and cheddar blend (unless you're using a pre-shredded version). Combine in a bowl and mix.

9. Preheat your oven to 400°F.

10. Once the breadsticks have completed their second rise, lightly brush each one with some olive oil.

11. In a small bowl, mix the black and white sesame seeds together.

12. Sprinkle the garlic-cheese blend evenly over the breadsticks, along with the sesame seeds and the Parmesan cheese.

13. Place the baking sheets in the preheated oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the breadsticks are golden brown and cooked through.

14. Remove the breadsticks from the oven and allow them to cool slightly before serving. These garlic Parmesan breadsticks are best served warm and can be enjoyed on their own or dipped in marinara sauce or ranch dressing.

What's So Special About Garlic?

Garlic, a culinary staple, is beloved not just for its vampire-fighting prowess, but for its sharp, distinctive flavor and remarkable health benefits. Central to garlic's medicinal reputation is a compound called allicin. When garlic cloves are crushed or chopped, allicin is released, bringing potent antimicrobial properties when the garlic's eaten raw. Allicin battles bacteria, viruses, and fungi, making garlic a natural ally in boosting immune function. Garlic is also rich in vitamins C and B6, manganese, and selenium, nutrients that play an integral role in bolstering wellness.

Garlic's potential involvement in body detoxification is even more intriguing. At high doses, the sulfur compounds found in garlic can defend against organ damage caused by heavy metal toxicity. But that's not all: Garlic is also jam-packed with antioxidants, compounds that help defend against oxidative stress and may contribute to the prevention of chronic diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia. These antioxidants can reduce inflammation and work with other bioactive elements to maintain cellular health and vitality. Not bad for one little plant.

Jalapeño Cheddar Cornbread

A crumbly concoction bursting with irresistibly cheesy and zesty flavors

Packed with the perfect blend of sweet corn and spicy jalapeños, this delectable cornbread promises an explosion of flavor in every bite. Easy to whip up and impossible to resist, these squares will be the star of any gathering.

Yield: 15 squares

Ingredients

1 cup frozen corn kernels
Butter or cooking spray, for greasing
1 cup yellow cornmeal
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 Tbsp granulated sugar
1 Tbsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 cup unsalted butter
1 cup buttermilk
2 large eggs
2 medium jalapeño peppers

Instructions

1. Remove the corn from the freezer and let it thaw.
2. Preheat your oven to 400°F.
3. Ready a 9-by-13-inch baking dish by greasing it with either butter or non-stick cooking spray.
4. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the yellow cornmeal, all-purpose flour, sugar, baking soda, and salt.
5. Put the butter in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave it until it's fully liquid. Let it cool.
6. Create a well in the center of the dry mix and pour in the buttermilk, which will react with the baking soda to ensure your bread rises well. Into this pool, add the melted butter and crack in both of the eggs.
7. Blend the wet elements into the dry ones until just combined.

Caution here is key: Overmixing leads to toughness.
8. Using a sharp knife, cut open the jalapeños, discard the seeds and ribbing, and then dice the peppers finely.
9. Gently fold these fiery flecks into your batter along with the room-temperature corn kernels; their sweetness and texture play against the spice splendidly.
10. Transfer this vibrant batter to your prepared dish, spreading it out into a level layer for uniform cooking. Place the baking dish in the preheated oven and bake for about 30 minutes or until the edges have a slight golden-brown crisp to them.
11. Once baked, remove the dish from the oven and allow it to cool for a few minutes before slicing the bread into 15 even squares.
12. Serve warm, eating the bread on its own or enjoying it as an accompaniment to soups, stews, or chili.

Top-Notch Tomato Basil Focaccia

Prepare a dish that stands on par with the culinary mastery of an Italian nonna

Discover the epitome of effortless baking with this artisanal focaccia. Easily crafted, this golden-brown delight boasts succulent cherry tomatoes, fragrant basil, and savory garlic in a flavor medley that looks and feels heaven-sent.

Yield: 12 servings

Ingredients

1 ¾ cups warm water
1 Tbsp sugar
1 Tbsp active dry yeast
4 cups all-purpose flour
⅓ cup olive oil, plus more for coating and drizzling
1 Tbsp coarse salt, plus more for sprinkling
2 cups cherry tomatoes
¼ cup fresh basil leaves
4 cloves garlic
2 Tbsp dried basil

Instructions

1. Combine the warm water and sugar in a bowl and mix until the sugar is dissolved. Sprinkle the active dry yeast on top and let it sit for five to 10 minutes until it becomes frothy.

2. In a large mixing bowl, add the flour and stir in the frothy yeast mixture. Add in the olive oil and salt. Mix everything using a wooden spoon until combined.

3. On a lightly floured surface, knead the dough for about 10 minutes until it's smooth.

4. Coat a clean mixing bowl with a thin layer of olive oil. Place the dough back in the bowl and cover it with a damp cloth or plastic wrap. Let it rise in a warm place for about an hour (it should double in size).

5. Preheat your oven to 425°F with an empty sheet pan or baking stone on the center rack.

6. Lightly grease a high-rimmed baking sheet (18-by-13 inches) with olive oil. Punch down the risen dough and transfer it to the prepared baking sheet. Using your fingertips, press and stretch the dough to fit the pan. If it's too elastic, let it rest for five minutes and continue shaping.

7. Wash, dry, and cut the cherry tomatoes in half. Rinse and dry the basil leaves. Peel and mince the garlic.

8. Evenly place the cherry tomato halves and garlic onto the dough. Sprinkle the dried basil across, and lightly drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle salt across everything.

9. Cover with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let it rise again for 20 minutes, until it's puffed.

10. Carefully slide the baking sheet onto the preheated sheet pan or baking stone in the oven. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown.

11. Remove the focaccia from the oven and let it cool slightly in the pan before cutting it into 12 squares. Sprinkle the fresh basil leaves on top, and serve warm. Enjoy your creation!

Essential Equipment

Besides the ingredients, there are a few things every baker needs to pull together perfect loaves. Here are eight must-have bread-baking essentials.

Baking stone or steel. These retain heat better than regular baking sheets, creating a steady temperature environment that's ideal for crusty breads.

Cast iron Dutch oven. Perfect for baking artisan loaves, Dutch ovens help retain steam during baking, resulting in a crispy crust and soft crumb interior.

Danish dough whisk. This specially designed whisk makes quick work of mixing sticky bread dough, incorporating ingredients without overworking the gluten. Its curvy design allows easy scraping of your mixing bowl.

Digital scale. For consistent results, you can measure ingredients by mass rather than volume. A grams-measuring digital scale ensures you get the precise measurements bread-baking requires.

Dough scraper. A must-have for working with sticky dough, a flexible dough scraper efficiently transfers your dough onto a working surface and assists in folding, shaping, and cutting it.

Lame. Pronounced "lahm," this tool is a razor-sharp blade used to create controlled slashes on bread just before baking, so it expands evenly in the oven.

Proofing baskets. These shaped baskets provide support for dough during the final proofing stage—encouraging an even rise and consistency of form.

Stand mixer. A heavy-duty stand mixer with a dough hook attachment takes on the kneading for you—it's essential to produce the elastic gluten development you want with no arm fatigue.

Savory Sweet Potato Rolls

Revel in these perfectly balanced, tasty, toasty, buttery wonders

These tantalizing rolls are a joy to make, see, and eat, and are easily whipped up at home. Enhanced with the subtle sweetness of sweet potatoes and kissed by a golden, buttery glaze, they're the perfect comfort food to accompany nearly any dinner.

Yield: 12 rolls

Ingredients

1 large sweet potato
¾ cup milk
1 packet active dry yeast
¼ cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 tsp salt
6 Tbsp unsalted butter, softened
4 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
Vegetable oil or cooking spray, for greasing
2 Tbsp melted salted butter, for brushing

Instructions

1. Peel and chop the sweet potato into small pieces, then boil it in water until the pieces are tender (about 15 to 20 minutes). Once done, mash them thoroughly to get one cup of smooth mashed sweet potatoes.
2. Warm the milk to 110°F. In a small bowl, combine the warm milk with the active dry yeast and a small pinch of the sugar. Stir gently and let it rest for about five minutes until foamy, indicating that the yeast is alive and active.
3. In a large mixing bowl, combine the mashed sweet potatoes, granulated sugar, eggs, and salt. Mix until well incorporated.
4. Add the softened, unsalted butter to the bowl and stir gently until it's completely blended into the potato mixture.
5. Gradually add in the all-purpose flour and mix until the dough begins to form. (It should be soft but not overly sticky.)
6. Knead for about ten minutes to work the dough until it's agreeably smooth and stretchy.
7. Lightly oil a large bowl with some vegetable oil or cooking spray. Place your dough in the bowl, turning it to coat each side with oil. Cover the bowl with a clean kitchen towel and place it in a warm place to rise until doubled in size. (This should take about an hour or so.)
8. After the dough has risen, give it a gentle punch down to release any air bubbles, and then turn it onto a lightly floured surface.
9. Divide the dough into twelve equal pieces using either your hands or a bench scraper.
10. Shape each piece into a smooth ball by gently pulling the edges underneath to create surface tension. Place each ball onto a parchment-lined baking sheet, leaving some space between them for expansion.
11. Cover the shaped rolls with a clean kitchen towel and let them rise again in a warm place until doubled in size, which should take about 30 to 45 minutes.
12. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
13. Place the salted butter in a microwave-safe bowl and melt it gently in the microwave.
14. Once the rolls have doubled in size, brush the tops with the melted butter.
15. Bake the rolls in the preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes, or until they're golden brown on top and sound hollow when tapped on the bottom.
16. Remove the rolls from the oven and let them cool slightly on a wire rack before serving.

Yum! Everything Bagel Seasoning

Indulge in the convenience of pre-made everything bagel seasoning—or better yet, unleash your culinary prowess by concocting your own tantalizing blend from scratch at home.

Yield: about 1 cup

Ingredients

¼ cup white sesame seeds
¼ cup black sesame seeds
¼ cup poppy seeds
2 Tbsp dried minced onion
2 Tbsp dried minced garlic
2 Tbsp flaked sea salt

Instructions

1. Add the black and white sesame seeds into a dry skillet on medium heat and toast them for three to five minutes, stirring frequently. Remove the skillet from the heat and let the seeds cool completely.
2. Transfer the toasted sesame seeds into a mixing bowl, then add the poppy seeds, onion, garlic, and sea salt.
3. Stir until all the ingredients are well combined.
4. Use immediately or store in an airtight container for up to six months for maximum freshness.

Flavor Inclusions

Turn ordinary recipes into extraordinary delights with baked-in tasty bits

Bread is the perfect base for culinary creativity. While classic bread recipes are undeniably comforting, infusing your dough with herbs, spices, nuts, and other flavors can take your baked creations to new heights. The possibilities are virtually endless, but here are a few.

Rosemary and Garlic: The earthy aroma of rosemary combined with the pungent kick of garlic creates a savory bread that pairs perfectly with soups or as a standalone appetizer. Simply chop fresh rosemary and minced garlic, then knead them into your dough before shaping and baking.

Cinnamon and Raisin: For a delightful twist on classic breakfast bread, try incorporating ground cinnamon and plump raisins into your dough. The warm, soothing flavor of cinnamon complements the sweetness of the raisins, resulting in the taste of home in a toast that's perfect for slathering with butter.

Cheddar and Jalapeño: Spice up your bread game with the bold flavors of cheddar cheese and jalapeño peppers. Finely grated cheddar and diced jalapeños add a punch of heat and strong savory taste to your dough. This bread is ideal for sandwiches or serving alongside two-alarm chili.

Orange and Cranberry: Embrace the vibrant flavors of citrus and berries with this delightful combination. Zest

Savory nuts and seeds pair well with sweet dried fruits like cranberries.

an orange and mix it with dried cranberries, then incorporate both into your dough. The tangy sweetness of the orange and tartness of the cranberries create a bread that's perfect for afternoon tea or brunch.

Creating your own flavor infusions is simple, as long as you're okay with a bit of experimentation. First off, consider pairing strong, bold flavors with milder ones to achieve a harmonious balance in your breads. For example, the intense spice of cayenne pepper pairs beautifully with the subtle sweetness of honey in a dough. Don't be afraid to experiment with contrasting flavors, either—think dark chocolate and sea salt. Some of the best creations have come from playing off opposites that end up working beautifully together. The texture of your flavor infusions plays a big role too, so consider how they will affect the texture of the bread itself. For example, seeds will add a slight chewiness, while toasted nuts will add a crunch. Most important of all, however, is not to overdo it. "If you add too many mix-ins, they will weigh down your bread; also, the flavors won't be balanced," says LeAnne Yaakubov, an artisan baker and internet personality, on her blog Lion's Bread. "I generally go for about one cup or 100 grams of each mix in, and I think one to two different inclusions per loaf is plenty." If possible, test your flavor, texture, and combination choices in small batches before committing to larger quantities so you can make sure everything works together. Also: have fun.

Scones work well as savory treats (like cheddar) or sweet ones (like honey sesame).

Authentic Cebularz Lubelski

Classic Polish onion mini-flatbreads that deliver purple-hued pleasure to every plate

Indulge in the savory delight of cebularz lubelski, a taste sensation straight from the heart of Poland. This recipe creates a golden-brown, pillowy-soft yeast dough, topped with decadent caramelized onions and lovingly baked to perfection.

Yield: 12 flatbreads

Ingredients

Onion Blend

2 large red onions
2 Tbsp salted butter
1 tsp freshly cracked black pepper
½ tsp kosher salt
2 Tbsp poppy seeds, plus extra for sprinkling

Yeast Blend

1 cup room temperature milk, plus extra for brushing
1 Tbsp brown sugar
½ Tbsp honey
10 grams active dry yeast

Dough Blend

4 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for rolling
½ tsp salt
1 egg
½ cup milk
2 Tbsp salted butter, softened
Olive oil, for greasing

Instructions

1. Peel and dice the onions.
2. Place the butter in a pan on medium heat and let it melt. Add the onions, then cook them for about 45 minutes until they're caramelized.
3. After letting the mixture cool, add the pepper, salt, and poppy seeds. Mix, then place in the fridge for two or three hours.
4. Combine room-temperature milk, sugar, and honey in a small bowl, then whisk to dissolve the honey and sugar. Add the active dry yeast, and watch for it to start bubbling (indicating it's active).
5. For the dough blend, add the flour and salt to a large mixing bowl, followed by the egg, milk, and softened butter. Mix all the ingredients until they're well combined, ensuring no dry clumps are remaining.
6. Add the yeast mixture to the dough blend mixing bowl and knead the dough for about 10 minutes until it's stretchy. Shape the dough into a large ball.
7. Lightly grease a large bowl with olive oil and transfer the dough ball in. Cover the bowl with a cloth for about 90 minutes, until the dough doubles in size.

Black pepper contains an antioxidant compound called piperine that helps with inflammation.

8. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
9. Separate the dough into 12 mini dough balls.
10. Lightly flour your work surface and begin rolling out the dough balls into discs with raised edges and indented middles.
11. Line a baking tray with parchment paper and place the discs an equal distance apart from one another.
12. Take the onion mixture out of the fridge and divide it evenly among the 12 discs. Loosely cover the discs with a clean kitchen towel and leave them for about an hour until they've once again doubled in size.
13. Lightly brush each soon-to-be flatbread with milk and sprinkle some poppy seeds on each. Place the tray in the center rack of your oven and let it bake for 20 minutes.
14. Remove the tray from the oven to let the flatbreads cool on a wire rack for 15 minutes before enjoying.

Spinach and Feta Spanakopita

Bite down on a flaky yet tender Greek specialty that melts in your mouth

Transport yourself to the sun-kissed shores of the Mediterranean with this easy-to-make Greek goodie. It's a harmonious fusion of fresh spinach, tangy feta cheese, and fragrant herbs nestled within layers of golden, crispy phyllo pastry.

Yield: Eight servings

Ingredients

1 lb fresh spinach
1 medium onion
3 cloves garlic
½ cup butter, divided
2 large eggs
¼ cup fresh parsley
¼ cup fresh dill
1 cup crumbled feta cheese
Pinch of salt
Pinch of freshly ground black pepper
Cooking spray
12 sheets of premade phyllo pastry

Instructions

1. Wash, drain, and dry the spinach leaves. Remove any thick stems, then roughly chop them.
2. Peel the onion and garlic, dicing the former and finely mincing the latter.
3. Heat a large skillet over medium heat, then add half of the butter (1/4 cup) and let it melt. Sauté the onions for about three minutes until they become translucent but not browned. Add the minced garlic and cook for an additional minute or two.
4. Stir in the spinach and cook for about five minutes or until it's wilted. Once cooked, transfer the spinach mixture to a colander. Squeeze out as much liquid as possible using a spatula or wooden spoon, and let it cool down to room temperature.
5. Crack the eggs into a bowl and lightly beat them.
6. Rinse the parsley and dill, pat them dry, then give them a rough chop.
7. In a mixing bowl, mix the crumbled feta cheese, eggs, parsley, dill, salt, and black pepper.
8. Add the cooled spinach mixture to the feta mixture and mix thoroughly until all the ingredients are evenly distributed.
9. Preheat your oven to 350°F. Grease a baking dish of your choosing with non-stick cooking spray.
10. Melt the remainder of the butter in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave it until it's melted, then let it cool.
11. Place one sheet of phyllo pastry into a baking dish. Brush gently with the melted butter, ensuring an even coating. Add another sheet of phyllo on top of the first sheet and brush this one as well with melted butter. Repeat this process until you have used four sheets in total.
12. Spread half of the spinach and feta mixture over the buttered phyllo sheets, leaving an inch margin on all sides.
13. Layer four more sheets of phyllo pastry, brushing each with melted butter, on top of the spinach-and-feta layer.
14. Press gently (here & on each layer) to empty any air pockets.
15. Spread the remaining half of the spinach and feta mixture over the second set of buttered phyllo sheets.
16. Finish by layering four more sheets of phyllo pastry, brushed with melted butter in between, on top of the final spinach-and-feta layer.
17. Using a sharp knife, score the top phyllo layers into eight equal squares or triangles (depending on your preferred shape), trying not to cut through the spinach layer underneath.
18. Transfer the dish to the preheated oven, and let it bake for 35-40 minutes or until the pastry is golden brown and crispy.
19. Once baked, remove the spanakopita from the oven and let it cool for a few minutes before slicing along the scored lines.
20. Serve warm as an appetizer or a main dish.

Kneading Know-How

Kneading is an essential bread-making step: It develops the gluten, giving bread its chewiness and structure. Here are three popular, common techniques for working that dough.

The basic fold method: This is a traditional technique where you press the dough away with the heel of your hand, fold it back over itself, and then rotate it and repeat. This motion stretches the gluten strands and aligns them, creating a network that can trap gas, for a light, airy loaf.
Stretch-and-fold technique: Gently stretch out the dough, fold it onto itself like an envelope, rotate, and repeat. This works for wetter doughs because it strengthens the dough without adding too much flour or overworking the gluten.
Slap-and-fold approach: This is perfect for high-hydration doughs. Lift the dough, slam it down onto the work surface, then stretch and fold it back on itself—the quick motions are essential for stopping stickiness.

NOTE: Proper kneading affects texture significantly. Under-kneaded bread will be dense and rise poorly, while over-kneaded dough can result in tough bread. The right kneading gets you a perfect balance between airy and structured, which is essential for that delectable chew in every bite. Regardless of the method, you should test for gluten development using the windowpane test. Stretch a bit of dough between your fingers; if it forms a thin sheet (that you can see light through) without breaking, it indicates good gluten structure and means that your kneading is complete.

Pear, Thyme, and Gorgonzola Flatbread

A visually captivating, flavorful dish that's perfect for your next Instagram post

Gather 'round for a culinary creation that pairs the sweetness of ripe fruit with the tangy bite of creamy blue cheese, all atop a homemade crust that's both tender and crisp. The aromatic hint of fresh thyme will lure your family into the kitchen; the amazing creation they'll find there will surprise and delight.

Yield: one large flatbread

Ingredients

1 cup warm water
1 Tbsp sugar
1 packet of instant yeast
Olive oil, for coating and drizzling
3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for kneading
1 tsp fine sea salt
2 Tbsp olive oil, plus more for drizzling
½ cup softened cream cheese
¾ cup crumbled Gorgonzola cheese
Pinch of kosher salt
Pinch of black pepper
1 ripe pear
3 sprigs thyme

Instructions

1. In a small bowl, mix the warm water and sugar until the sugar dissolves. Then sprinkle in the yeast, and let it sit for about 10 minutes or until it becomes frothy as it activates.

2. Lightly coat a larger mixing bowl with olive oil.

3. In that large mixing bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour with the sea salt. Make a well in the center and pour in the yeasty water along with the olive oil. Mix until you have a shaggy dough. Flour your hands and knead the dough inside the bowl for one minute before transferring it to a floured surface.

4. Knead for approximately 10 minutes—you're aiming for a smooth and elastic texture. Shape the dough into a ball and place it in the oiled bowl, turning once to coat it. Cover with plastic wrap or a damp kitchen towel for one hour and let it rise until it's doubled in size.

5. Preheat your oven to 450°F.

6. Punch down your dough softly on a floured surface to release any air bubbles. Roll it out to get a nice rounded dough, and pinch the edges to make them slightly raised. No need for perfection—rustic charm is part of the appeal.

7. For the topping mixture, blend the softened cream cheese with about half of the Gorgonzola using a fork; season it lightly with the kosher salt and pepper. The mix should be uniform but streaky with blue cheese.

8. Spread this mixture across the rolled-out dough, with a thick and generous application—this is the good stuff.

9. Wash the pear before thinly slicing it lengthwise. You can leave the skin on for rustic appeal (just be sure to remove seeds).

10. Arrange the thinly sliced pears on top of the cheese mixture—they should be fanned out or slightly overlapped for optimal coverage without weighing down the bread. Drizzle a little olive oil over the bread.

11. Carefully transfer the assembled flatbread onto a baking stone, or use a baking sheet lined with either parchment paper or a silicone baking mat.

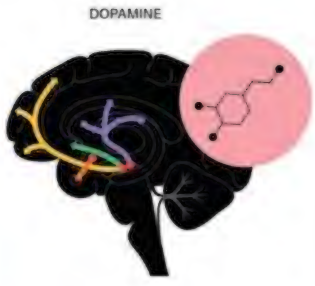
12. Bake in the oven for 15-20 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown.

13. Once baked, remove from the oven and immediately sprinkle the remaining half of the Gorgonzola cheese atop the flatbread, along with the sprigs of thyme. Dig in and enjoy!

Gorgonzola, a specific type of blue cheese, is an excellent source of protein, vitamin D, and calcium.

The Healing Crust

Celebrate the therapeutic power of bread, which envelops families in a warm embrace



Some research indicates that even seeing delicious food can release dopamine, the "pleasure hormone."

The relationship between bread and our sense of well-being has long intrigued social scientists and bakers alike. From its comforting taste to its satisfying aroma, bread offers a sensory experience known to soothe the soul and lift the spirits of people everywhere. Whether we're savoring a freshly baked sweet loaf or enjoying a slice of your favorite sourdough variety, the simple act of eating, making, or even just smelling fresh bread can have profound effects on our mental and emotional health.

The Impact of Bread on Our Well-being

For millennia, eating bread has been synonymous with comfort and sustenance. Modern science offers new insights into why this is so, thanks to a new understanding of the role of carbohydrates in mood enhancement. When we consume bread, the carbs break down into sugars, spiking blood glucose levels. This triggers the release of insulin, which enables the amino acid tryptophan to enter the brain more easily. Tryptophan is a precursor to serotonin—the neurotransmitter called the "feel-good" chemical for its link to happiness. As Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (a 16th-century Spanish novelist, poet, and playwright) once said: "All sorrows are less with bread." At some level, we've known this all along.

Additionally, dopamine—a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward—also makes an entrance when we indulge in a slice of our favorite loaf. It's no wonder that on days filled with gloom or stress, we often reach out for that crusty piece of bread to soothe our souls; the carbohydrates can kick off a brain reward. "It relieves a depressed mood and controls aggressiveness," explains clinical psychologist and professor Peter Rogers on The Independent. "It's also beneficial in cases of pre-menstrual tension, and in a state known as winter depression."

The Multisensory Experience of Baking

Bread's restorative powers aren't just limited to consumption: Even the act of baking bread is a holistic sensory experience with psychological benefits. Mixing ingredients by hand, feeling the texture of the dough softening under your palms, and shaping and scoring all provide a tactile pleasure that is both grounding and meditative. Listening to the sounds of bread-making adds another layer to the experience: The gentle rustling of flour being sifted, the rhythmic thud of dough being kneaded on the countertop, and the crackling sound of the crust as you slice into it are all part of the symphony of bread-making.

The tactile experience of making bread can be both grounding and meditative.

Observing the transformation of simple ingredients like flour, water, yeast, and salt into a beautifully risen loaf is mesmerizing. As the bread bakes, the kitchen fills with a warm, yeasty, familiar fragrance that evokes feelings of comfort and home. Different types of bread, from sourdough to cinnamon swirl, offer distinct and enticing aromas. But of course, the best sensory engagement of all is the moment you bite into the light and airy bread you just brought to life.

Making bread at home brings not just contentment, but the satisfaction of creating something amazing with your own two hands—there's a tangible outcome from your hard work. Home bakers get to master skills and knowledge that boost confidence and self-esteem, connect with their unique cultural cuisine, and flex their creative muscles—all in the context of keeping their family alive. It's essentially enhanced play for adults, enacted in an alternative form—one that

Bread acts like a perfect vessel for whatever toppings you're in the mood for.

soothes the mind. "The physical activity and sensations associated with baking can be very grounding for people who feel anxious or overwhelmed, as it heightens awareness of their body and being present in the moment," says clinical psychologist and nutritionist Dr. Nicole Beurkens.

The Timeless Connection to Nostalgia

Many types of bread carry particular cultural significance or evoke a shared family history, and each new loaf can catalyze a familiar emotional comfort. Sourdough may remind you of lazy Sunday brunches with loved ones, while rye might bring back memories of hearty sandwiches at Grandpa's house. These nostalgic connections foster an emotional tie to bread beyond its nutritional value, increasing its status as a source of mental and emotional well-being. While taste plays a major role, smell is actually a key aspect of these nostalgic connections: Our olfactory bulbs, which our brains use to detect aromas, happen to be positioned near regions that process memory and emotion, which helps explain why certain scents can evoke vivid feelings and recollections. A simple slice of bread can become a vessel for boosting our mood and carrying us back to treasured moments frozen in time—a gentle reminder that despite life's complexities, simple pleasures can be really profound.

Research from University College Dublin unmistakably supports this. When 1,000 individuals were questioned about the memories invoked by the aroma of fresh bread right from the oven, 63% said that it brought back positive memories. Numerous respondents conjured up familial ties or nostalgia from their formative years. Around 30% utilized terms like "mum" or "mother," about 20% landed on "childhood," and a significant 16% associated the smell with "grandparents" or "home." The bread we grew up with—and the associations tied to it—can trigger emotions that reinforce feelings of security and contentment. Nearly 9 out of 10 of those surveyed reported experiencing a sense of happiness when they detected the smell of freshly baked bread.

The Cultural Significance of Bread

Bread traverses the boundary between mere sustenance and profound cultural artifact. It's the ultimate universal staple, kneaded in different ways into civilizations around the world, and that gives it deep meaning beyond its role as food. In Christianity, bread assumes a sacred role as the body of Christ in the Eucharist, embodying spiritual sustenance. Jewish tradition honors bread through the Shabbat blessing over challah, symbolizing provision and gratitude.

Bread production is the original social evolution, marking the shift from nomadic living to agriculture. This pivotal change is echoed in rituals like Egypt's offering of loaves to deities, signifying both gratitude and dependence on divine providence. Even political significance is baked into bread's crust: Prior to the French Revolution, riots over bread called attention to economic disparity and basic human rights.

In daily life, bread carries an emotional weight as a symbol of home. Who hasn't felt solace in the scent of freshly baked bread? It's a reminder of shared experiences at family tables worldwide—from dipping naan in an aromatic curry to savoring a crusty baguette with cheese. Bread feeds our souls and stitches together a tapestry of communal identity. Each loaf tells a story—a blend of the grains of history and culture, leavened with human experience.

Sweet Indulgences

Who said you can't have bread for dessert? These tasty treats prove the point

For those yet to create a sweet loaf—not quite bread, not quite cake—this section's about to change your life. Turn the page and embark on an international tour of tempting treats that are *almost* as fun to make as they are to eat. Work the dough and explore a wide world of delights, from the twisty marvels of chocolate babka to the zesty tang of lemon blueberry bread to the classic comfort of bread pudding. Baking bread doesn't just satisfy your hunger: It feeds your soul. There's a therapeutic joy in kneading, pounding, and baking these expressions of culinary art to life, and your family will be just as excited to deconstruct your works—one delicious bite at a time.

Colomba Pasquale is a sweet Italian bread dotted with dried fruit and candied orange peel.

Baking with Love

Why making and eating freshly baked bread can be a great addition to nearly any self-care routine

In a world that's always buzzing, it's no surprise so many of us turn to comfort food like homemade bread to calm our minds and forget, for a moment, our worries and responsibilities. Some people don aprons to bake bread and enter into a unique kind of meditative state—minus the crystals and cross-legged "oms." Baking demands that we be present in the moment, with a very structured process that can be a comforting, immersive rituatl. "Baking your bread gives you a feeling of self-reliance—there's a manifestation of control," explains Chef Akshay Malhotra in *The Times of India*. And completing a baking project? That delivers instant gratification through sensory rewards: The aroma of fresh bread wafting through the air, the visual beauty of a well-baked crust, and most importantly that flavorful first bite of your creation all contribute to a boost in dopamine levels, enhancing feelings of pleasure.

Bread baking can induce a flow state: deep immersion and energized focus.

Cooking is a little fluid, but baking requires patience and focus. The precision involved in measuring ingredients taps into our analytical skills, forcing our minds into the present and away from everyday concerns. We have to diligently watch that our yeast froths up, ensure we're using the correct methods and techniques, and control the temperature. Distractions fade away as the meticulous detail-oriented nature of baking forces you to follow the recipe. This switch in cognitive gears can be relaxing in itself, as attention shifts from abstract concerns to concrete tasks with clear end goals. In such instances, individuals may enter into what's called a "flow state." Coined by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, this state typically involves deep immersion in a task where individuals experience a sense of energized focus, enjoyment, and optimal performance. Individuals in a flow state often lose track of time and may feel a heightened sense of control and satisfaction.

One last psychological gift from baking: pride in sharing your creation. Gifting homemade bread or serving it at your table brings joy and fosters community and kindness among friends and family. "Homemade bread is the perfect gift for any time of year," says recipe developer Amanda Paa on her blog Heartbeet Kitchen. "Gift wrapping bread using twine with seasonal herbs or flowers is beautiful and easy!" Bread has long been central to human culture, connecting us in a long line of families that came before us: and not just to those of our own lineage, but to humans all around the globe today.

Classic Monkey Bread

Each delectable doughy piece you pull off will treat your tummy to a warm, gooey hug

This whimsical creation transforms ordinary dough into a spectacular centerpiece as you sculpt it into delightful, bite-sized morsels. Infused with a decadent blend of cinnamon and sugar, each golden-brown piece promises a symphony of flavors that will captivate your taste buds.

Yield: one monkey bread

Ingredients

1 packet active dry yeast
⅓ cup warm water
1 cup unsalted butter
1 cup milk
2 large eggs
¼ cup granulated sugar
2 tsp salt
3 ½ cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for kneading
Nonstick cooking spray
1¼ cup brown sugar
3 tsp ground cinnamon

Instructions

1. In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast in the warm water. Let it sit until it becomes frothy and bubbly, around five to 10 minutes.
2. Melt the unsalted butter in the microwave (in a microwave-safe bowl) until melted; let it cool.
3. Warm the milk in a saucepan over medium heat to about 110°F. While it's warming, lightly beat two eggs in a bowl.
4. In a large mixing bowl, combine the frothy yeast mixture with the warm milk, two tablespoons of the melted butter, beaten eggs, granulated sugar, and salt. Stir them together until everything is incorporated.
5. Gradually add in the all-purpose flour. Start by adding about two cups, and mixing until combined. Continue adding flour a little at a time,while mixing, until a soft dough forms.
6. Transfer the dough onto a lightly floured surface. Knead it with your hands for about seven to eight minutes until you have a stretchy dough. If it's too sticky to handle, lightly sprinkle more flour as you knead.
7. Grease a bowl with cooking spray and place the dough in. Move it around a bit so it's coated in the oil. Cover the bowl with a kitchen towel and let it rise until it's doubled in size, or for about one hour.
8. Preheat your oven to 350°F. Generously butter a bundt pan with the melted butter using a pastry brush. (You should still have some butter left over, which you'll use in the coming steps.)
9. In a new bowl, mix one cup of brown sugar and the ground cinnamon for a sweet coating.

In another separate bowl reserve half of the remaining melted butter so it's ready to use.

10. When your dough has finished its first rise, punch it down gently to deflate it. Then turn it out onto a lightly floured surface.

11. Break off the dough into small pieces, each roughly the size of a walnut.

12. Dip each piece of dough into the bowl of melted butter then roll through the cinnamon-sugar mixture, ensuring even coverage.

13. Place these coated dough balls into the prepared bundt pan, strategically layering them to create an even distribution without direct uniform stacking.

14. Once you're done layering, cover the bundt pan and allow it to rise until the bread is nearly doubled, which should take about one to two hours.

15. After it has risen, place it in the oven and let it bake for 30 to 40 minutes until golden brown.

16. Remove the pan from the oven, let it cool for five minutes in the pan, then release the bread onto a platter.

17. While it's cooling, it's time to mix the glaze. Combine the remaining brown sugar (1/4 cup) and the remaining butter in a bowl, whisk vigorously until you have a caramel-like syrup, and drizzle it over the top and sides before serving.

Bready bites infused with cinnamon and sugar will be irresistible to tiny hands.

The Science of Yeast

Yeast is a microscopic fungus that's an indispensable catalyst in baking. Its primary role is to convert the sugars in flour into a tiny bit of alcohol and a lot of carbon dioxide. This is called fermentation, and it traps gas bubbles in the dough's gluten network, causing it to rise and resulting in fluffy loaves or pastries. There are three main types: active dry, instant, and fresh.

Active dry yeast: This yeast consists of coarse, granular particles. It usually requires dissolving in warm water (proofing) before use, which rehydrates the dormant cells, and is great for artisan or no-knead breads.

Instant yeast: A finer powder, instant yeast can be mixed directly with dry ingredients, as it activates quickly. It's also known as rapid- or quick-rise yeast. It's great for quick doughs, as it absorbs water quicker.

Fresh yeast: Also known as cake yeast, this is soft and moist with a short shelf-life (two weeks in the fridge) and needs to be dissolved in a liquid component of the dough.

Temperature profoundly affects yeast activity. Too cold an environment slows down fermentation, delaying the rising of the bread, while too high a temperature can kill the yeast. The ideal temperature for yeast-based dough to rise is usually between 75°F and 85°F. Precision in temperature control ensures that the yeast thrives, making for consistent baking results that produce airy, well-textured bread.

Chocolate Babka

Explore the mesmerizing swirls and oh-so-sweet flavors of this classic treat

Elevate your baking with this sweet tooth satisfier. This heavenly treat from Eastern Europe features a buttery, tender dough swirled with rich, bittersweet chocolate and a luxurious hazelnut spread—each slice is a decadent delight.

Yield: one babka

Ingredients

½ cup unsalted butter
½ cup warm water
¼ cup granulated sugar
1 tsp salt, plus a pinch
1 tsp instant yeast
2 large eggs
1 egg yolk
3 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for kneading
Nonstick cooking spray, for greasing
½ cup bittersweet chocolate
½ cup chocolate hazelnut spread
⅓ cup lukewarm water
6 Tbsp brown sugar

Instructions

1. Melt the unsalted butter over low heat or in the microwave (in a microwave-safe bowl) until just melted. Allow it to cool slightly.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine the warm water with the sugar, salt, and instant yeast. Allow this mixture to sit for about five to 10 minutes until it slightly foams.
3. Add the melted butter to the yeast mixture, followed by the two eggs and one egg yolk. Mix all thoroughly.
4. Gradually add the all-purpose flour, one cup at a time, until the dough starts to pull away from the edges of the bowl but is still slightly sticky.
5. Knead the dough on a lightly floured surface or in your mixer for about ten minutes, until it's smooth and elastic.
6. Form the kneaded dough into a ball and place it in a greased bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm environment for about 90 minutes or until the mixture has just about doubled in size.
7. While the dough rises, prepare your filling by chopping the bittersweet chocolate finely so that it will melt evenly when spread over your babka.
8. After the dough has risen, turn it out onto a floured surface and roll it into a rectangle that's roughly 15 by 11 inches.
9. Spread the chocolate hazelnut mixture evenly over the dough, leaving a small margin around the edges to prevent spillage during rolling. Sprinkle the finely chopped bittersweet chocolate across the nutty layer.
10. Start from one long side of your rectangle and roll the dough up tightly into a log. Seal the ends by pinching them closed. Cut the log in half lengthwise, position both long pieces with the cut

side up, and intertwine both long dough half-logs together so you have a long, fat braided loaf.
11. Grease a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan, then transfer the twisted dough in, tucking in ends that might protrude.
12. Cover the loaf pan with a clean kitchen towel or plastic wrap and let the babka rise again for 90 minutes until it slightly puffs up.
13. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
14. Prepare the syrup by combining the lukewarm water, brown sugar, and a pinch of salt in a small saucepan. Bring the mixture to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally until the sugar is completely dissolved. Remove from the heat and set it aside.
15. Place the babka in the preheated oven and bake for 40 to 50 minutes, or until golden brown.
16. Remove it from the oven and leave it to cool in the pan for 15 minutes. Then brush the warm syrup over the top, allowing it to soak into the babka.
17. Remove the babka from the pan, letting it cool completely before slicing and serving. Enjoy your chocolatey treat!

Apple Cinnamon Pull-Apart Bread

Tear off warm, glaze-covered pieces dripping in cinnamon glaze...while there's still some left

This is a true fall treat that'll make you want the season to last forever. With the addition of fresh apple, earthy pecans, and some subtly kicky cinnamon, your family will be basking in flavors that fulfill all their deepest cravings.

Yield: 10 servings

Ingredients

½ cup warm whole milk
½ cup unsalted butter, divided
1 packet active dry yeast
¼ cup white sugar
1 large egg
2 ½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
½ tsp salt
Nonstick cooking spray, for greasing
1 large apple
½ cup pecans
⅓ cup brown sugar
1 ½ Tbsp cinnamon, divided
1 cup powdered sugar
2-3 Tbsp almond milk

Instructions

1. Put the milk in a saucepan and let it heat up on medium-high heat until it reaches 110°F.
2. Melt half of the unsalted butter (1/4 cup) in a microwave-safe bowl for 10-15 seconds or until melted.
3. In a small bowl, combine the milk and active dry yeast. Let it sit for about five to 10 minutes until it becomes frothy.
4. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the melted butter, white sugar, and egg until well combined. Pour in the activated yeast mixture and stir. Gradually add

all-purpose flour and salt, stirring until a dough forms.
5. Transfer the dough onto a floured surface and knead it for about eight to 10 minutes. Grease a bowl with cooking spray, then place the dough in the bowl, cover it with a clean kitchen towel, and leave it to rise in a warm place for about one hour until it doubles in size.
6. While the dough is rising, peel and core the apple and then finely chop it into small pieces.
7. Crush or chop the pecans into smaller pieces.
8. Put the other half of the butter (1/4 cup) in a microwave-safe bowl, then melt it in the microwave. Allow it to cool slightly.
9. Combine the brown sugar and one tablespoon of cinnamon in a small bowl.
10. Generously coat a 9-by-5-inch bread pan with cooking spray.
11. Once the dough is done rising, lightly punch it down to deflate it, then roll it out on a floured surface into a rectangle. Brush it with the melted butter and sprinkle the brown sugar and cinnamon mixture on top. Sprinkle the apple cubes and pecan pieces as well.
12. Using a pizza cutter or knife, slice the dough into smaller rectangles (about three by four inches). Then, pile the rectangles onto one another in stacks of three or four. Place the stacks in your prepared bread pan with the sides facing up (as in the picture). Add them to the pan in a single straight line or put them on a diagonal, for added flair.
13. Cover the loaf pan with a towel and let it rise for another 30-45 minutes until it becomes puffy, while you preheat the oven to 350°F.
14. Bake the bread for 35 minutes, and cover it with aluminum foil for the final 10 minutes.
15. While the bread bakes, whisk together the powdered sugar, remaining cinnamon, and almond milk in a small bowl until smooth—this is your glaze.
16. When the bread is golden-brown, remove it from the oven and let it cool slightly before transferring it to a wire rack to cool completely.
17. Drizzle the glaze freely over the bread, and dig in!

Luxurious Lemon Blueberry Bread

Let the fruity flavors of this sweet yet zingy loaf obliterate the memory of your terrible day

This lemon-blueberry delight is incredibly easy to make and jam-packed with antioxidants, meaning you're boosting your health with every moist, tasty bite.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

Ingredients

½ cup extra virgin olive oil, plus more for greasing
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for coating
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp sea salt
2 lemons (you'll need about 2 tsp of lemon zest and 5 Tbsp of juice, divided)
⅓ cup honey
1 cup Greek yogurt
2 large eggs
1 ½ tsp vanilla extract, divided
1 cup fresh blueberries
2 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted
1 cup powdered sugar

Instructions

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F and grease a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan with olive oil.
2. In a bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, baking powder, and sea salt until well combined.
3. Zest one lemon using a citrus zester until you have two teaspoons, then roll both lemons across the counter, pressing down gently to release their juices before squeezing. (The zest and juice of the lemon counteract the sweetness of the berries.)
4. In a separate bowl, mix the honey, the lemon juice, and the lemon zest. Stir in the Greek yogurt and extra virgin olive oil into the mixture until smooth. Add the eggs and one teaspoon of vanilla extract; whisk until the eggs are combined.
5. Gently fold the dry ingredients into the wet mixture using a spatula until combined. Then stop: Be careful not to overmix.

Tossing your blueberries in flour may thicken the batter around the fruit; use a sieve to avoid over-coating.

6. Rinse the blueberries and toss them in some flour to coat them; this should help prevent them from sinking to the bottom.
7. Carefully fold the floured blueberries into the batter and mix thoroughly until combined.
8. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan and smooth out the top with a spatula.
9. Put it in the oven and let it bake for about 50-60 minutes. Insert a toothpick in the center to make sure it comes out clean.
10. Remove the bread and let it cool for 30 minutes before transferring it to a wire rack.
11. Melt the butter in the microwave and let it cool slightly.
12. Prepare the glaze by combining the melted butter, powdered sugar, remaining (2 Tbsp) lemon juice, and remaining (1/2 tsp) vanilla extract, then whisking them together.
13. Pour the glaze over the fresh loaf and dive in.

Storing Bread 101

Bread is at its best during the first 48 hours after baking, so unless you're planning a quick sandwich binge, storing it in a paper bag won't cut it. But room temp is better than the fridge, according to Real Simple magazine: Too much airflow will dry it out, while excessive moisture may invite mold. To keep a loaf longer, wrap it in plastic and place it in a bread box or a cupboard away from direct sunlight and heat sources, which can accelerate staleness. When possible, place a partial loaf cut side down—this method shelters the bread from excess air while maintaining crust crispness.

When you need to store bread for longer, freezing works really well. Wrap the bread in plastic wrap—which can help to prevent freezer burn—followed by aluminum foil or freezer paper. You can then place the wrapped bread in a reusable freezer bag for an added moisture barrier, if desired. Just remember to ensure the bread has completely cooled before freezing it. Pro tip: Slice your loaf *before* freezing, to make your life easier after. Bread can last in the freezer for up to three months without losing quality.

Dessert Breads Around the World

Wherever you wander, there's a sweet, decadent after-dinner treat waiting to be discovered

When bread is laced with sugar, spices, and all things nice, it becomes something delightful—all over the world. Here's a quick global tour of dessert breads that'll make you want to pack your bags tonight.

Italy: Panettone is Italy's Christmas gift to the world—it's a Milanese specialty that is lofty and boasts a dome-shaped top. It harbors jewels of candied fruits and raisins within its light, airy texture, making it mildly sweet with bursts of citrus notes. Toasted with butter or enjoyed as-is, panettone's pillowy mouthfeel is a holiday highlight.

France: This country's answer to sweet indulgence is brioche—a bread so rich it blurs the lines between pastry and bread. "One of the most emblematic and most liked breads in France is definitely Brioche!" asserts Saïd M'Dahoma, a former neuroscientist turned pastry chef. With generous amounts of eggs and butter folded into its dough, brioche has a golden crust giving way to a soft, plush interior. Its buttery goodness melds perfectly with a subtle sweetness, making it versatile enough for sandwiches or as a simple snack with jam.

Japan: Despite not traditionally containing melon flavor, melonpan is a Japanese specialty with a distinctive crisscross pattern that resembles a melon rind. This bread has a crisp cookie crust enveloping a fluffy brioche-like interior. The result: a harmonious blend of textures that combines the sweetness of cookie dough with the lightness of bread.

Mexico: Conchas from Mexico get their name from their shell-like appearance. These sweet rolls have a buttery bread base crowned with a crunchy sugar shell, often flavored with vanilla or chocolate. When bitten into, they offer resistance before yielding to softness—an experience just as whimsical in taste as the pastel colors suggest.

Panettone is so delicate that when it cools, the loaf is hung upside down to prevent it from collapsing.

This cinnamon brioche uses layers of brioche, which are stuffed and twisted into a festive design.

Portugal: Portugal offers us pão de deus, or "God's bread." These buns are similar in texture to brioche, and they're topped with coconut cream before being baked, which yields a unique crisped top layer—truly a divine combination. Made with rum, this treat has an interesting back story. "This bread dates back to the 1400s," declares Portuguese culinary enthusiast Michael Santos. "In Portugal, on All Saints Day, it was a tradition to offer bread to lost souls."

Finland: Finland's pulla tells a story of Nordic simplicity and aromatic warmth. Laced with cardamom and occasionally

Clockwise from top left, above: pulla, melonpan, conchas, and pão de deus.

Sugary breads from around the world burst with cultural pride.

adorned with slivered almonds or pearl sugar, pulla is braided, ensuring its flavors intertwine in every bite. Its chewy edges enclose a tender interior crumb, making each bite subtly sweet and engagingly spiced.

Germany: Here you'll find stollen, a fruit bread rich with history dating back to the 14th century. Dense with dried fruits, nuts, and marzipan and dusted with powdered sugar, stollen tastes like a sweet Christmas morning wrapped in every slice. Its heavy but tender texture is traditionally enjoyed during the holidays.

Stollen, left, is traditionally prepared in the Christmas season.

Pretty Pumpkin Spice Loaf

Satisfy your senses with warm, earthy flavors dancing behind a golden exterior

As autumn's crisp air fills your kitchen, embrace the season's chill with this irresistible warm creation—a symphony of spices and velvety pumpkin. With simple, stress-free preparation, this recipe ensures that every slice is a celebration of fall's bounty.

Yield: 12 servings

Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray
1 cup canned pumpkin
1 cup white sugar
½ cup vegetable oil
2 large eggs
¼ cup water
1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp salt
2 tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp ground nutmeg
¼ tsp ground cloves

Instructions

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F.
2. Grease a standard-sized loaf pan with a bit of nonstick cooking spray.
3. In a large mixing bowl, combine the canned pumpkin, sugar, vegetable oil, and eggs. Mix with vigor until you've achieved a smooth and homogenous mixture. Once it's mixed well, incorporate the water to slightly thin out the batter.
4. In another bowl, sift together the all-purpose flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Mix these dry ingredients well.
5. Gradually fold the dry mixture into the wet ingredients. It's essential to do this gently to avoid overworking the batter, which can lead to a too-dense loaf.
6. When you're satisfied with your batter (it should be relatively thick with no visible streaks of flour), pour it into the prepared loaf pan. It will be somewhat heavy and might require a rubber spatula to spread evenly into the corners of the pan.
7. Tap the pan on your work surface to eliminate air bubbles, which helps give your bread a uniform texture throughout.
8. Bake for about 60-70 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
9. Remove the pan from the oven and let the bread cool for 10-15 minutes. Then carefully run a knife around the edges of the loaf to loosen it from the pan, and gently invert the loaf onto a wire rack to cool completely before slicing, serving, and savoring.

Nutmeg is the secret star of your pumpkin spice blend. For the best flavor, freshly grate whole nutmeg.

Cinnamon Raisin Swirl Bread

A flaky exterior encases fluffy sweetness, with complexity woven into each pillowy slice

This homemade cinnamon raisin bread is especially great when warmed and served with butter.

If this is your first cinnamon raisin swirl rodeo, you're in for a pleasant surprise that might just spark a new favorite. Moist with a crispy crust, this sweet treat is perfect for breakfast, dessert, or snack time.

Yield: one loaf

Ingredients

¾ cup milk
4 Tbsp unsalted butter
2 tsp active dry yeast
¼ cup granulated sugar, plus 1 Tbsp
3 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for kneading
½ tsp salt
1 large egg
1 egg yolk
½ tsp vanilla extract
A neutral oil, for coating
1 cup raisins
¾ cup dark chocolate chips
2 tsp ground cinnamon
Nonstick cooking spray

Instructions

1. Warm the milk in a saucepan. Turn it off once it's warm, but not hot (about 110°F).
2. Melt the butter in the microwave and let it cool slightly.
3. Combine the warm milk with the active dry yeast and one tablespoon of sugar. Stir gently to dissolve and let stand until frothy, about five to 10 minutes.
4. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the remaining sugar, all-purpose flour, and salt. Create a well in the center and add in the egg, egg yolk, melted butter, and vanilla extract.
5. Pour the frothy yeast mixture into the well and mix using a wooden spoon or dough hook attachment until a shaggy dough begins to form.
6. Transfer the dough onto a floured surface and knead for about 10 minutes until it's smooth and elastic.
7. Coat a bowl with a thin layer of neutral oil. Place the dough in the bowl, cover it with plastic wrap or a damp towel, and let it rise in a warm place until doubled in size—about 90 minutes.
8. Soak the raisins in warm water for 10 minutes, and then drain them thoroughly.
9. Put the chocolate chips in a saucepan and stir until they've melted. In a small bowl, combine the cinnamon, raisins, and melted chocolate—this is your filling.
10. Roll the dough out on a lightly floured surface into about an 11-by-15-inch rectangle. Spread the filling evenly over the dough, pressing it gently into place.
11. Starting on the long edge, roll the dough up tightly into a cylinder. With seam-side down, cut down lengthwise through the middle creating two long half-cylinders.
12. Braid these two pieces by lifting one over the other repeatedly, then pinch both ends.
13. Spray a loaf pan with cooking spray. Transfer and layer the dough in, tucking in any portions that may be sticking out.
14. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
15. Let the braided loaf rise (covered) in a warm place for about 30 minutes.
16. Bake the bread for 40 to 50 minutes, until it's golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
17. Take the bread out of the oven and cool it (in the pan) for 10 minutes or so. Then, carefully transfer it out of the pan to a wire rack to cool completely. Invite friends and family to dig in.

What's So Special About Cinnamon?

Cinnamon, a sweet, earthy spice, isn't just about enhancing the flavor of pumpkin pies and recipes like this one. This humble bark, harvested from Ceylon or Cassia trees, is packed with an array of impressive health benefits. Rich in antioxidants, cinnamon ranks high on the ORAC scale, which measures the ability of a substance to combat oxidative stress. By neutralizing harmful free radicals, it helps fend off cellular damage and chronic disease. Equally remarkable is cinnamon's anti-inflammatory prowess. It contains compounds capable of inhibiting inflammatory molecules within the body, reducing swelling and pain—much like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). But a moderate amount of cinnamon won't give you these drugs' side effects.

Cinnamon's antimicrobial effects should not be underestimated. Cinnamaldehyde, the organic compound that gives cinnamon its flavor and scent, is a potent antimicrobial agent that can battle various bacteria, fungi, and viruses. This makes cinnamon an ally in food preservation and a natural remedy for respiratory tract infections.

Buttery Bread Pudding

Have breakfast and dessert at the same time with this moist, raisin-studded bowl of bliss

This recipe is simplicity itself, transforming stale bread into a flavorful masterpiece. It infuses each spoonful with rich cinnamon, nutmeg, and plump raisins; with a moist interior and crisped edges, you taste the best of both worlds.

Yield: two servings

Ingredients

3 Tbsp unsalted butter
1 ½ cups of stale or day-old bread
2 large eggs
2 ½ cups whole milk
¾ cup white sugar
1 tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
¼ cup raisins

Instructions

1. Melt the butter in the microwave and let it cool.
2. Preheat your oven to 350°F. As the oven warms up, grease two 8-inch ramekin bowls with a little bit of the melted butter to ensure the bread pudding doesn't stick.
3. Cut the bread into roughly one-inch cubes. It's all right if they're not perfectly shaped; their irregularities are what make homemade bread pudding charming (and what allows for delightful crispy edges).
4. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk the eggs. Incorporate the rest of the melted butter into the beaten eggs while whisking continuously so that it emulsifies nicely into a smooth blend.
5. Add the whole milk to the egg mixture incrementally while stirring constantly.
6. Mix the white sugar, ground cinnamon, and ground nutmeg together in a small, separate bowl before folding it into the wet ingredients until everything is combined.
7. Gently stir in the raisins. If you fancy plump raisins in each bite, soak them in warm water for about ten minutes beforehand—just remember to drain thoroughly before use.
8. Add the cubed bread to the ramekin bowls, then pour the egg-milk-raisin concoction on top and let it sit for five minutes to ensure each piece of bread absorbs some of the liquid.
9. Lift each bowl and tap it gently on the countertop to settle out any air bubbles. Using a fork, push down on the bread to help it soak up the liquid.
10. Place the ramekins on a baking sheet (to catch any potential spillover) and transfer the sheet to the preheated oven to bake for about 30-45 minutes until the custard is set. To test doneness, lightly press the top—it should spring back. It should have a pretty, golden-brown hue.
11. Remove the ramekins from the oven and let them cool slightly. Serve and enjoy.

Knead to Know

Your all-in-one, centralized bread-baking resource center

Don't want this warm, crusty journey to end? Here are some next steps for new bakers to explore.

Apps

- For passionate bakers on the go, the Rise bread baking app is a standout choice. It offers an extensive collection of excellent recipes, can outline your baking schedule from inception to completion, and gives you timely reminders for upcoming actions.

- Another indispensable app for bakers is Kneady, which boasts a library of more than 500 top-tier recipes developed and tested by expert bakers.

Books

- Plant-based bread lovers should try *BReD* (2023) by Ed Tatton, a vegan chef and artisan bread-maker. He features tried and tested baking techniques for making the perfect sourdough loaf and other baked goodies.

- *The Bread Baker's Apprentice* (2016) by Peter Reinhart traces his journey perfecting techniques and learning alongside renowned bakers, with step-by-step photos.

- *Six Thousand Years of Bread* (1944, republished in 2014) by H. E. Jacob, a Nazi Germany escapee, delves into the ancient history of bread and its surprising roles in various realms like politics and religion.

Documentaries

- *Bread: An Everyday Miracle* (2020), explores the bread industry. Director Harald Friedl interviews artisan bakers and cereal farmers, and discusses issues like production and sustainability.

- *For the Love of Bread* (2021) is a documentary series that follows Andrew Connole, founder of Sonoma Baking Company, as he travels around the world in search of bread's secrets, trends, and histories in other lands.

- On YouTube's documentary streaming channel Get.factual, check out *Bread: From Grain to Daily Nourishment* (2023), a 50-minute documentary of the past, present, and future of bread.

Podcasts

- *Baking with House of Bread* (hosted by Sheila McCann, former attorney and bakery owner) dives into every aspect of bread making, from detailed discussions about ingredients to proper techniques to specific recipes.

- *The Sourdough Podcast*, by Mike Hilburn (a stay-at-home dad and sourdough baker), has tons of fun interviews with bakers, authors, growers, and millers. Their stories are informative and inspirational, and deeply explore details of the baking process.

Social Media Accounts

- For mouthwatering recipes and easy-to-follow creations, join the nearly 500,000 followers of home baker and recipe developer Rachel Pardoe on Instagram, at @sourdough_enzo.

- Check out @the_bread_code on YouTube; software engineer Hendrik Kleinwächter dives into biochemical reactions, baking tips and tricks, and recipes.

- Maurizio Leo, baker and author of the James Beard Award winning NYT bestseller *The Perfect Loaf*, takes us along for Instagram reels (at @maurizio) where he creates amazing loaves and bread-focused pastries.

HOMEMADE BREAD
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CONTENTS

4-5 (top, left to right) Westend61/Getty Images; alvarez/Getty Images; tbralnina/Getty Images; Gillian Tso/Getty Images; (middle, left to right) A_Columbo/Getty Images; Sonyworld/Getty Images; wabeno/Getty Images; muratkoc/Getty Images; Pronina Marina/Getty Images; bhofack2/Getty Images; valio84sl/Getty Images; Andrey Trunov/Getty Images; ossphotostock/Getty Images; bhofack2/Getty Images; Pronina Marina/Getty Images; (bottom, left to right) Nastco/Getty Images; Konev Timur/Getty Images; DMP/Getty Images; alvarez/Getty Images

INTRODUCTION

6 (top to bottom) Magone/Getty Images; malerapaso/Getty Images **7** (top to bottom) Harbucks/Getty Images; yipengge/Getty Images

HEARTY AND HEALTHY BREADS

8-9 (top to bottom) wmaster890/Getty Images; MEDITERRANEAN/Getty Images **10-11** (clockwise from top left) Igor Barilo/Getty Images; Claudia Totir/Getty Images; Westend61/Getty Images; Panya_sealim/Getty Images; R.Tsubin/Getty Images **12-13** (left to right) Westend61/Getty Images; xamtiw/Getty Images; Aleksandr Zubkov/Getty Images **14-15** aluxum/Getty Images **16** EMS-FORSTER-PRODUCTIONS/Getty Images **17** (left to right) Anna Pustynnikova/Getty Images; phototechno/Getty Images **18** Liudmila Chernetska/Getty Images **19** (left to right) Westend61/Getty Images; samael334/Getty Images **20** (clockwise from left) phanasitti/Getty Images; Grigorenko/Getty Images; olgakr/Getty Images **21** (clockwise from top left) RHJ/Getty Images; Karisssa/Getty Images; Goddard_Photography/Getty Images; Joa_Souza/Getty Images **22-23** (clockwise from left) vaaseenaa/Getty Images; Viktoriia Oleinichenko/Getty Images; vaaseenaa/Getty Images **24-25** (top) Marat Musabirov/Getty Images; (left to right) Oleksandr Sytnyk/Getty Images (2); jenifoto/Getty Images **26-27** (clockwise from left) Francesco Vaninetti Photo/Getty Images; etienne voss/Getty Images; Francesco Vaninetti Photo/Getty Images **28** malerapaso/Getty Images **29** (clockwise from top left) Stefan_S/Getty Images; Wirestock/Getty Images; stevanovicigor/Getty Images; emer1940/Getty Images **30-31** (clockwise from top left) Nadia M/500px/Getty Images; Grafissimo/Getty Images; joste_dj/Getty Images; Vitalina/Getty Images; Evgenii Emelianov/Getty Images

SOURDOUGH SENSATIONS

32-33 (top to bottom) LeMusique/Getty Images; alvarez/Getty Images **34-35** (left to right) Elif Bayraktar/Getty Images; leonori/Getty Images; Andrii Zastrozhnov/Getty Images **36-37** (clockwise from bottom left) alvarez/Getty Images; Vitalii Petrushenko/Getty Images; RapidEye/Getty Images; JONGHO SHIN/Getty Images **38-39** (left to right) alvarez/Getty Images; grimri/Getty Images; Parissi, Lucy/Getty Images **40** Freila/Getty Images **41** (top to bottom) CRISTINA PEDRAZZINI/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY/Getty Images; Photographer, Basak Gurbuz Derman/Getty Images; DustyPixel/Getty Images **42-43** (left to right) alenkadr/Getty Images; Oksana Nazarchuk M/Getty Images; MonicaNinker/Getty Images; Olga_Gavrilova/Getty Images **44** Gajus/Getty Images **45** (top to bottom) Stefania Pelfini, La Waziya Photography/Getty Images; Nataliia Pyzhova/Getty Images **46** LeMusique/Getty Images **47** (top to bottom) Vladimir Mironov/Getty Images; Rouzes/Getty Images **48-49** (left to right) Khris/Getty Images; Say-Cheese/Getty Images; vanillla/Getty Images **50** MarcoFood/Getty Images **51** (top to bottom) ballycroy/Getty Images; stphillips/Getty Images

FLAVORFUL TWISTS

52-53 (top to bottom) igorr1/Getty Images; teelesswonder/Getty Images **54-55** (left to right) Janna Danilova/Getty Images; lacaosa/Getty Images; Anna_Shepulova/Getty Images **56-57** (clockwise from bottom) OksanaKiian/Getty Images; Mindaugas Kurmis/Getty Images; bhofack2/Getty Images; aristotoo/Getty Images; Anna Mardo/Getty Images **58** bhofack2/Getty Images **59** (top to bottom) Floortje/Getty Images; HandmadePictures/Getty Images **60** Carlo A/Getty Images **61** eli_asenova/Getty Images; (right, top to bottom) Ana Rocio Garcia Franco/Getty Images; EGT/Getty Images; public domain via jessaminedungo.blogspot.com; Elena Popova/Getty Images; Westend61/Getty Images; CC BY-SA 3.0 Nleamy via Wikimedia Commons; Mint Images/Getty Images; Dmitry_Evs/Getty Images **62** Candice Bell/Getty Images **63** (left to right) lamthatiam/Getty Images; LauriPatterson/Getty Images **64** (clockwise from left) Socreative/Getty Images; Floortje/Getty Images; GMVozd/Getty Images **65** (clockwise from top left) Wirestock/Getty Images; phive2015/Getty Images; Dragos Rusu/500px/Getty Images; malerapaso/Getty Images **66** ALLEKO/Getty Images **67** (top to bottom) megaflopp/Getty Images; Everyday better to do everything you love/Getty Images; Ottini Graziano/Getty Images **68** (top to bottom) Zakharova_Natalia/Getty Images; electravk/Getty Images **69** (left) Juanmonino/Getty Images; (right, top to bottom) GMVozd/Getty Images; KarpenkovDenis/Getty Images **70-71** (left to right) sveta_zarzamora/Getty Images; fcafotodigital/Getty Images; Prostock-Studio/Getty Images **72-73** (clockwise from top left) Westend61/Getty Images; vvmich/Getty Images; Pikovit44/Getty Images; Ridofranz/Getty Images; ChamilleWhite/Getty Images **74-75** (clockwise from top left) Avtor/Getty Images; PeopleImages/Getty Images; Ridofranz/Getty Images; photovs/Getty Images; udra/Getty Images; AlexPro9500/Getty Images

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76-77 (top to bottom) Picsfive/Getty Images; Nico De Pasquale Photography/Getty Images **78** Magone/Getty Images **79** (clockwise from top left) Os Tartarouchos/Getty Images; AnnaStills/Getty Images; luliia Isaieva/Getty Images; Elena Lavrinovich/Getty Images **80-81** (clockwise from bottom left) StephanieFrey/Getty Images; domnicky/Getty Images; Valentyna Yeltsova/Getty Images; Claudio Rampinini/Getty Images; Artur Plawgo/Getty Images **82** bhofack2/Getty Images **83** (top to bottom) Wirestock/Getty Images; Creativ Studio Heinemann/Getty Images **84-85** (left to right) VeselovaElena/Getty Images; Javier Zayas Photography/Getty Images; MmeEmil/Getty Images **86-87** (left to right) Miragest/Getty Images; Xvision/Getty Images; lisegagne/Getty Images; Robert Lowdon/Getty Images **88** (left to right) arina7/Getty Images; Anjelika Gretskaia/Getty Images **89** (clockwise from top left) Materio/Getty Images; kazoka30/Getty Images; Fabian Montano/Getty Images; nataliaspb/Getty Images; Flavia Morlachetti/Getty Images **90-91** (left to right) StephanieFrey/Getty Images; domnicky/Getty Images **92-93** (left to right) Gillian Tso/Getty Images; MBPROJEKT_Maciej_Bledowski/Getty Images; Gillian Tso/Getty Images; Natureveryday/Getty Images **94** vm2002/Getty Images **95** (top to bottom) annick vanderschelden photography/Getty Images (2) **96-97** (clockwise from top) Drazen Zigic/Getty Images; Jeff Schear/Getty Images; aleksandrakonwa/Getty Images **98** Sladic/Getty Images

Bake Their Day!

This guide puts the best breads of the world at your fingertips... so you can deliver all kinds of home-baked joy to the ones you love.